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Cultural Adaptation and Rural Migrant Housing

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Abstract

The global expansion of capitalism in the second half of the twentieth century has had considerable effects on both the process of city growth and the urban environment. In the Third World, over-urbanization, fed by an increasing rural-urban mobility, fosters the emergence of squatter or marginal settlements. During this process, rural populations undergo abrupt changes in their culture as they experience city life. In addition to changing residence, migration to urban settlements means transferring traditional rural values to a complex cultural network operating in large cities.

The present study approaches Third World urbanization through a critical analysis of the cultural adaptation process of rural migrants (CAP). Social scientists identify the CAP as a transitional situation in which people must learn to function simultaneously in different cultural systems, typically circumscribed into a dual categorization: 'the traditional' versus 'the modern'. Taking place between these two conditions, the CAP is influenced and constrained by socio-economic macrostructures and processes that define cultural change. This thesis explores rural migrants' CAP by analyzing the material culture of Chalco, a squatter settlement located in the outskirts of Mexico City.

Self-help transformations of migrant housing produce a unique phenomenon. House forms and the selection of building materials, for instance, are defined not only by spatial or functional needs, but also by social priorities for adaptation. Preconceived aspects of housing evolution such as comfort or the reproduction of rural life are not necessarily priorities for migrants. On the contrary, the informants in Chalco favor the use of distinctive material signs that may help them to create their identity as urbanites. Hence, it is essential to view rural migrant housing as a physical expression of both residents' attempts to adapt to the urban culture (i.e., to participate in social mobility) and of the reproduction of social inequalities resulting from the nature of urbanization and development processes.

Résumé

La mondialisation du capitalisme durant la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle a eu des effets considérables sur le processus de croissance urbaine et sur l'environnement urbain lui-même. Dans le Tiers-Monde, l'urbanisation incontrolée, nourrie par l'augmentation des déplacements entre la campagne et la ville, a créé des bidonvilles ou quartiers marginaux. Suite à ces déplacement, la population rurale subit de brusques changements culturels alors qu'elle fait l'expérience de la vie urbaine. En plus d'un déplacement physique, l'arrivée en un lieu urbain veut aussi dire le transfert de valeurs rurales traditionnelles dans les réseaux culturels complexes qui caractérisent la grande ville.

La présente étude se penche sur l'urbanisation du Tiers-Monde par une analyse critique des processus d'adaptation culturelle des migrants ruraux. Les chercheurs en sciences sociales ont identifié le processus d'adaptation culturelle comme une situation transitoire où les populations ont à apprendre à fonctionner simultanément dans différents systèmes culturels, systèmes typiquement décrits par la catégorisation du 'traditionnel' et du 'moderne'. Prenant place entre ces deux conditions, les processus d'adaptation culturelle des migrants sont plutôt influencés et contraints par des macro-structures et processus socio-economiques. Cette thèse présente une étude de la culture des migrants ruraux basée sur une analyse de la culture materiélle de Chalco, un bidonville de la banlieue de Mexico.

La transformation de l'habitation par les migrants eux-mêmes produit un phénomène unique. La forme des maisons et le choix des matériaux, par exemple, sont déterminés non seulement par des besoins fonctionnels ou spatiaux mais aussi par des priorités d'adaptation sociale. Les aspects préconçus de l'évolution des bâtiments comme le confort ou la reproduction de la vie rurale ne sont pas nécessairement des priorités pour les migrants. Au contraire, ceux-là favorisent l'usage de signes matériaux distinctifs qui les aident à se créer une identité urbaine. Il est donc essentiel de voir l'habitation des migrants urbains comme l'expression matérielle de leur désir de s'adapter à la culture urbaine et de la reproduction des inégalités sociales qui résultent de la nature des processus d'urbanisation et de développement.

Sumario

La globalización del capitalismo durante la segunda mitad del S. XX ha tenido efectos considerables tanto en el proceso de crecimiento de la Ciudad, como en el ambiente urbano. En el tercer mundo, la descontrolada urbanización provocada principalmente por un incesante flujo migratorio, sigue alimentando la aparición de barrios marginales. Durante este proceso, poblaciones rurales sufren cambios abruptos en su cultura en cuanto comienzan a vivir la experiencia urbana. Ademas del cambio de residencia, emigrar significa también transferir valores tradicionales a las complejas redes culturales que operan en las grandes ciudades.

El presente estudio aborda el tema de la urbanización en el tercer mundo a través de un análisis crítico del proceso de adaptación cultural de emigrantes rurales. Algunos investigadores en las ciencias sociales identifican el proceso de adaptación cultural como una situación transitoria en la cual la gente debe aprender a funcionar en diferentes sistemas culturales simultaneamente; los cuales estan típicamente circumscritos en una categorización dual: 'lo tradicional' y 'lo moderno'. Dandose entre estas dos condiciones, el proceso de adaptación es mas bien influenciado y restringido por macroestructuras y procesos socio-económicos que definen el cambio cultural. Esta tésis explora la cultura de los emigrantes rurales analizando la cultura material de Chalco, un barrio marginal localizado en las afueras de la Ciudad de México.

La autocostrucción de la vivienda en barrios marginales produce un fenómeno único. La forma de la casa o la selección de los materiales de construcción, por ejemplo, son influenciados no solo por necesidades espaciales, sino también por prioridades sociales. Aspectos preconcebidos de la evolución de la vivienda, tales como el comfort o la reproduccion de la vida rural, no son necesariamente prioridades para los emigrantes. Al contrario, la mayoria de los habitantes de Chalco favorecen el uso de distintivos signos materiales que les ayudan a crear su identidad como urbanitas. De tal forma que es esencial observar la vivienda del emigrante rural como una expresión física tanto del deseo de sus residentes por adaptarse a la cultura urbana (esto es, participar en la mobilidad social), como de la reproducción de las desigualdades sociales resultantes de la naturaleza de los procesos de urbanización y desarrollo.

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Chapter One Introduction

Rationale

Rural populations all around the world undergo abrupt changes in their culture--their very system of survival--as they take the decision to move to the city. Migrants' world-views and traditional practices gradually adapt to best suit those already operating and rapidly changing in modern cities. In the Third World urban environment, this cultural adaptation process of rural migrants shapes the living spaces of migrant housing to a considerable extent. Here, as in any other setting, houses are not just the means through which spatial needs or personal requirements are satisfied; they are, as well, a summary of social and cultural forces interacting in the social setting where they are built. As Rapaport put it: "the dwelling is much more than the physical space in which one lives, it is also a social and cultural entity, reflecting the cultural change a certain society or social group may be undergoing" (Rapaport 1976, 35).

The present thesis analyzes cultural adaptation as one of the social processes that define the physical evolution of the built environment. Increasing interest in self-help housing, as a solution to the housing shortage in the Third World, is broadening its scope to include various disciplines of the social sciences. This research intends to shed light on the socio-economic and sociocultural factors that influence the adaptation process of migrants in Third World cities, and their expression in the material culture of a selected neighborhood.

Architects have long given attention to the sociocultural influences that define the built form, as they recognize that houses are mutable entities linked to societal transformations. In the 20s, Le Corbusier built Pessac, a 70-unit housing project intended to broaden architectural perspectives on housing from a sociological point of view. The 'experiment' consisted of initially providing the users with standard types of houses and total freedom to transform them. After some years, Le Corbusier returned and recorded stories of residents' lives to find the reasons which could have motivated them to enclose patios,

roof over terraces, modify windows, change colors, and so on. Pessac's main goal was explicitly to "clarify the relationship between the architect's original conception and the resident's reaction" (Boudon 1979, 2-7). Le Corbusier considered it necessary to observe, record, and take into account the cultural change experienced by residents of this project.

The relationship between housing and social life has also been the concern of traditional schools of sociology and anthropology. When the built environment is analyzed from this point of view the units of study are generally selected on the basis of kinship, ritual and cultural categories of social life. Classic methods of social sciences have generally focused on theoretical and empirical ethnographic studies that consider small, and at times isolated, social groupings (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Levi-Straus 1991).

Other writers in urban studies claim that "city growth is a strategic entry point to wider theoretical disputes about social change in general" (Smith 1996, 3). There are those who believe that the built environment can be best related to cultural transformations if attention is also extended to "peasants in cities" (Mangin 1970). Some even argue that "the locus of urbanization has moved from the economically advanced nations of the West to the relatively underdeveloped countries of the world" (Gugler 1988, 1). And many seem to agree that the rapid urbanization process of "non-Western societies is an important catalyst of [their] explosive cultural change" (Sémic 1973, 9). It is in this context that the study of the urban environment is particularly relevant because it is in this areas that the sociocultural change that influences the housing process is the most polarized, diverse and dynamic.

In addition, it is in this context that the gap between user needs and their satisfaction by architects (what Pessac was most emphatic about) is bridged. Migrant housing in the Third World is self-built; the only option for peasants migrating to the city is to build their housing themselves. In addition to migrants' limited resources and lack of access to the formal housing market, rapid city growth constrains the provision of sufficient urban

infrastructure and appropriate housing options. As a result, squatter settlements[1] have sprawled throughout the Third World since its industrialization in the second half of this century. Squatter settlements have had great impact on contemporary studies as they represent a new form of urban life and a new type of built environment whose complexity can be studied from many different perspectives.

Brazao studied the permanence of "tradition" and the presence of "change" in the Brazilian urbanization process, using migrant housing as an index (Brazao 1990). His research focused on comparing rural and urban socioeconomic systems at the local level as basic elements of analysis. The study emphasized the physical evidence of cultural change, avoiding an analysis on how migrants adapt to the urban environment. Architectural symbolism was successfully related to social, economic and cultural factors that motivate the decision-making process of the residents, though the time factor was not sufficiently taken into account.

The present study considers that the cultural adaptation of migrants should be followed as a process, since physical outcomes in migrant housing can be directly related to the specific changes in the life of migrants which motivated them. To undertake this research one basic question was formulated:

How does the process of cultural adaptation from a rural to an urban environment influence the physical evolution of migrant housing?

To answer this question we need to decipher, for instance, how living in the city represents for migrants the opportunity to achieve the social expectations that once motivated migration. Recently, some misleading views about rural migrants have been losing credibility: newcomers to modern metropolises do not segregate in order to perpetuate rural life, neither do they develop a fatalistic conception towards the future as a

---

[1]To use some local terms: *barrios marginales* (marginal neighborhoods), *barriadas* (slum quarters), *colonias proletarias* (proletarian colonies), *favelas*, *bidonvilles*, "parachute" settlements, *ciudades perdidas* (lost cities), or *cartolandia* (carboard-land).

response to their poverty. Squatter settlements are evidence of the aspirations and expectations of migrant households to integrate into the urban culture, as migrants may find the propitious environment for social mobility in such a setting. However, success in the physical realization of this social intention is determined, to an important degree, by their role within socio-economic systems in cities. And since the urban culture is defined by its links with the world system, rural migrant housing is influenced by factors of a global character as well.

In order to further this general idea, this study starts with one basic hypothesis:

The decision-making process involved in the self-help production of rural migrant housing is influenced by the larger socio-economic and sociocultural structures in society that define, to a considerable extent, migrants' process of cultural change.

Research goals

This study intends to contribute to the understanding of the self-help housing process by undertaking a critical analysis of underpinning structures in society that lie behind the decision-making process of individual households. The primary goal is to decipher what changes in migrants' lives influenced the kind of transformations their dwellings have undergone in their new urban setting. Housing transformations are, at the same time, related to macrostructural economic and political processes that highly frame the destiny of rural migrants. An anthropological research, supported by physical evidence, can shed light on the strategies that migrants follow to adapt to the urban society. Thus, analysis of the cultural adaptation process can broaden the scope of the social aspects involved in the phenomenon of self-help housing, suggesting a reconsideration of the human factor on the part of planners, policy makers or anyone working on issues of urban development.

Research Approach

This study focuses on an interpretation of how the material culture of housing reflects migrants' cultural adaptation, rather than on a quantitative evaluation of the self-help

building process. Issues such as land tenure and regularization which are usually associated with informal settlements are not addressed in this study. Instead of simply measuring continuing processes, it seems more relevant, in order to interpret sociocultural change, to establish parameters and assumptions. For the former, a basic one is that social behavior is shaped by both our own individual perception and by information transmitted by others. For the latter, it could possibly be useful for this research to say that such social behavior in action, i.e., the individual's everyday activities, combine to weave an intricate network of global interactions.

This approach to understand sociocultural change is commonly criticized by scholars inside an outside social sciences since, in fact, there are no models that accurately represent the relationship between the local and the global (Arizpe *et al.* 1996, 12). However, in the present information era in which global telecommunications are 'shrinking the world' relations, there seems to be a growing consensus that "the concept of the global system does have genuine scientific validity" (Sklair 1995,2). Leslie Sklair convincingly articulates the global system as a system based on transnational practices (TNPs). These are simply the individual's everyday activities that are thought to have consequences, no matter how infinitesimal, in the overall global system.

In order to exemplify, one can review Sklair's framework vis-à-vis everyday decisions made by rural migrants in the Third World. Someone who works for (or has been fired from) a manufacture plant subsidiary of a multinational firm, can be said to participate in an economic TNP; if the same person is being influenced to vote or support a cause by those whose interests are transnational, he/she is getting involved in a political TNP; and, when he/she "feels the need of a global product," or actually consumes, materials and supplies for constantly growing self-built housing, the individual is engaged in a cultural-ideological TNP (Sklair 1995, 6-7). This scheme can be helpful since its focus reaches beyond the limited vision of the world divided by nation-states, which explains little about complex and rapid cultural change.

Thus, scholars studying Third World urbanization have shifted towards the "new international political economy" approach for studying social change in cities:

> A complete understanding of the social dynamics and structure of Third World cities must begin with an attempt to situate these places in the global political economic system and from there to explore the articulation between that seemingly very abstract level and national and municipal dynamics, ultimately linking up with what happens 'on the ground' in the local neighborhoods where people live. (Smith 1996, 2)

The recently reformulated field of urban anthropology provides useful scientific tools to connect the lives of migrant settlers in the Third World with the global structures to which they are linked. Urban anthropology attempts to understand the basic processes and forces of class relations (via an examination of the division of labor, land property and gender issues and the mechanisms of capital accumulation), instead of concentrating on individual actors and their skills of adjustment (Gutkin 1983, 30).

If we were to study rural migrants' adaptation to the urban society by focusing entirely upon urban marginals themselves, it would mean "disregarding the larger context and the continuous interactive process" of class formation (Eames and Goode 1980, 285). Far from that, this analysis takes into account both other social strata with whom migrants share the urban culture, and inter-class relations that have an impact on migrants' cultural adaptation. The challenge is to identify local sociocultural changes related to the housing experience and associate them to global phenomena as much as possible. It is important to consider that the role rural migrants play within the production/consumption systems cannot be avoided in this analysis. In the capitalist world classes are to a considerable extent defined by economic functions within such systems of society, however, the risks of falling into economic reductionism are particularly considered (Skocpol 1977; quoted in Smith 1995, 11). Economic factors will be balanced with an overview of Mexico's contemporary history, that could help to better understand local sociocultural particularities obtained from the fieldwork conducted in the community of Chalco, Mexico.

Preview to the study

Following this introduction, the advice of urban anthropologists will be followed in the next chapter. Chapter Two addresses theories of urbanization and economic development that are to be used as tools for understanding the realities of the rural-urban migrant in the global context. Background information is complemented in Chapter Three, which is divided in three parts. Firstly this chapter provides a brief review of Mexico's urbanization process as related to the national political economy after WWII; it then focuses on the case of Chalco, a squatter settlement that emerged in the periphery of Mexico City in the late 70s; and, finally, the chapter presents a description of the research methodology, as well as some considerations regarding the nature of the field research that account for the analysis. In the two subsequent chapters, findings are presented in the format of an analytical description, supported by empirical data. Chapter Four is an analysis of the cultural adaptation process from an anthropological point of view. In Chapter Five, cultural adaptation will be related to housing, as the latter is regarded as one physical outcome of the former. Chapter Six presents a set of conclusions, suggestion for further research, followed by an epilogue at the end.

Chapter Two The Rural Migrant in the Third World Context: A theoretical framework

Introduction

The following review attempts to provide some theoretical tools necessary to understand the social dynamics of rural-urban migrants in the Third World context. In line with the hypothesis, the realities of people living in squatter settlements will be regarded as significantly influenced by processes such as urbanization and development. Thus, the following argument primarily aims to show how migrants' sociocultural changes can and should be correlated with their economic role in society. Throughout this chapter, the concepts that will be used in the following chapters will be introduced and defined. In short, this theoretical review is necessary in order to understand the facts and their consequences as they are in the Third World, in particular the complex process of cultural adaptation. If theories are not taken into account, analysis of the CAP would be misleading and would leave the discussion incomplete.

With that in mind, this chapter will briefly discuss how different views about urbanization and development count on significant elements to keep scholars (generally of contrasting opinions) busy in their search for synthetic theories. Different methods of regarding the urbanization process of the Third World should be fully considered before analyzing the context of the particular case study (in chapters Four and Five). The review, then, will attempt to balance all theories for a more objective understanding of the CAP.

2.1 Urbanization and Socio-Cultural Change

The urban revolution in which we are presently living represents the second era of great human transformations, following the domestication of plants and animals that made sedentary life possible around the year 9 000 BC. Although the first cities date back some five thousand years, by the mid-1800s urban settlers still accounted for only 3 percent of the world's total population. The first urban boom took place then, paralleling the first industrialization period. This increased the population living in cities by the end of the

19th century to 12.5 percent of the total world population. It is this century, however, that future generations will record as the century of the urban revolution: by the end of the 20th century, at least half of the population of the world, approximately 3 billion people, will live in cities (Gugler 1988, 1).

While urban growth has not been constant throughout history, the conditions accompanying the emergence of cities in different regions of the world have proved equally diverse. The modern-capitalist city originated in countries which first developed systems of manufacturing production, pulling massive rural migration towards industrial centers (Lewellen 1995, 171). By 1922, all countries in Western Europe and North America became predominantly urban (i.e., with more than 50 percent of their population living in cities), when Canada passed the urban threshold (Stern et al. 1992, 3). The consolidation of the Western city was made possible mainly because imperialist expansion and industrial production allowed capital accumulation. Urban infrastructure enabled most Western cities to become "foci of modernization and dynamism because they served as a conduit for information to developing societies and as loci for innovation, opportunity, and political transformation" (Smith 1996, 5).

Urban history in the Third World is quite different. Some cities were erected from the ruins of the capitals of conquered civilizations but many others were entirely built by the colonizers. Politically and economically, cities were structured on the dominant-subordinate relationship between the colonizers and the colonized (Lewellen 1995, 170-1). The organization and distribution of cities throughout the colonial territories was not determined by indigenous factors: mercantilists saw the colonial city as essential to their trading fortunes. Most colonial cities grew around ports that provided a route from the hinterland and access to its ore and agricultural commodities, and a passage to export trading markets. Contrary to the process of Western urbanization, industrialization was not the initial impetus for the growth of cities in the Third World; many cities had little manufacturing during colonial expansion (ibid., 171). Instead, the industrial revolution in Europe was the initial catalyst of Third World urbanization.

Non-western urbanites reached 17 percent of their total population by 1950, when nearly all of the colonies had achieved national independence. Since then, the rate of urbanization in the Third World has accelerated: the increase of the urban proportion of the population is now gradually outstripping that of the Western boom 75 years earlier. What makes post-war urbanization in the Third World "unprecedented in human history" is the sheer increase in the total population to which this proportion is applied (Gugler 1988, 8). According to UN estimates, by the year 2000, there will be nearly two billion people living in Third World cities, only 39.3 percent of the Third World's total population, but around 66 percent of the global urban population.[1]

2.2 Modernization Paradigm

Despite the particularities of urban history described above, one evolutionist-ecological model initially attempted to explain both First and Third World urbanization processes. Back in the 1950-60s, scholars assumed that the urbanization process in the Third World would follow a progression of stages paralleling the phases of city growth in European and North-American cities. This approach, belonging to a broader rubric known as modernization theory, basically regarded urban history of the Western countries as the model for the Third World (Smith 1996, 4). Comparative urban research was intended to explain specific outcomes of rapid Third World urban growth and to advise necessary improvement of the economy, as well as changes in transportation, communication and technology in cities with deficient infrastructure (ibid., 11). Despite these good intentions, it soon became evident that something was wrong with the modernization paradigm: predictions have not squared with the empirical reality. Now it is clear that urban development in the Third World is not as consistent with national economic growth as was the case with Western urbanization in the past, even in countries undergoing substantial economic modernization.

[1] UN (1986) Urban and Rural Population Projections, 1950-2025: The 1984 Assessment, New York:UN; quoted in Stern (1992) p.2.

Cities in the Third World have suffered and continue to suffer immense consequences for their rapid growth. The major problems observed in cities of richer countries have reached near epidemic proportion in Third World metropolises: housing shortages, inadequate sanitation, maldistributed and possibly contaminated water, air pollution, and overcrowded public transportation (Lewellen 1995, 170). The term over-urbanization is widely used to refer to insufficient urban systems, distorted by a still high level of natural growth plus an incessant migratory exodus towards cities in the Third World. This is merely the quantitative side of the problem.

Third World cities are also full of contradictions. For one observer, David A. Smith, Third World cities are:

> human settlements where uprooted people battling poverty and despair co-exist with tremendous wealth and opulent consumption. These cities of the poor are also sites for skyscrapers, suburban 'gated communities' and five-stars hotels that house societal and multinational elites as they work and play. Often, the shantytowns or slums are physically in the shadow of these monuments to opulence. 'Underdevelopment' and 'overdevelopment' literally exist side by side. (Smith 1996, 1)

Early scientific attempts to explain social polarization in Third World cities seem to have been limited. Before the 70s, social scientists entirely relied on the modernization paradigm to understand cultural change. The traditional schools of sociology and anthropology were handicapped by methodological and conceptual shortcomings. They were less occupied with deducing the causes of wealth maldistribution and poverty than with providing detailed descriptions of urban lives. Research conducted in Third World cities persisted for some time in studying only those in the deprived strata of the population. Oscar Lewis, for instance, viewed poverty as an independent social category that reproduces and perpetuates itself in what he categorized as the 'Culture of Poverty'. This influential approach sought to explain the disparities of wealth and power as a

consequence of the failure of traditional societies to become "modern" (Lewis 1959, 1961 and 1965).[2]

Other scholars even stressed that the critical impediment of traditional societies was the absence of decisive characteristics that have emerged in the West. These include investment capital, entrepreneurial proficiency and a secular sense of expediency in work-ethics. In their ethnographic accounts, social scientists with this view often assumed that all societies followed a linear model of progress, according to First World experience. The starting point of this evolutionary line is the 'traditional' society (feudal, rural, based on pre-Newtonian technology, fatalist, etc.) and the final one is the 'modern' society (capitalist, urban, industrial, and rational). On the whole, this dualistic perspective is linked to the conception of a world guided by the universal standards of 'the West' (the peoples of Western Europe and their descendants in North America). According to this highly established construct, "all modernizing or developing societies should, with time and maturity, look more and more like what is ethnocentrically called Western society" (Sanjek 1994, 145). From this perspective, it is unlikely that Third World societies can move in several directions, different from each other and different from that of the Western world (ibid., 146). In reality, Third World societies, while adapting to this 'evolutionistic line', develop particular cultural outcomes that do not correspond to linear preconceptions.[3]

The application of this 'evolutionistic logic' to urbanization has recently been criticized, especially by emerging social scientists who present a remodeled vision. Urban anthropologists have observed that in all classical views "the most critical issues have almost always been ignored" (Gutkin 1983, 29). Gutkin denounces the failures of functionalism when used for urban analysis, because of its inability "to identify the constantly changing structural mechanisms as they effected [sic] the daily life of people"

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[2]Besides listing some seventy of cultural traditions, mostly rural, Lewis suggested that those in the culture of poverty are relatively immune to changes generated by outside influences (Eames and Goode 1977, 277).

(ibid., 32). Instead of emphasizing the urban poor as an isolated culture, empirical studies, conducted mainly by urban anthropologists, focus on the mechanisms of class formation that have become indispensable to understanding social inequalities in the Third World. This important aspect, social polarization, disregarded almost completely by followers of the so-called human-ecological perspective, is just one of the particular outcomes of the process of urbanization in the Third World.

For the understanding of other imbalances, however, more recent work within the modernization paradigm has made valuable contribution to urban theory. The modernization theory of urbanization assumes an equilibrium model in which very rapid urban growth is only a transitional phase on the path to modernity (Smith 1996, 7). Take as a case in point cities more than twice as large as the next largest city in Third World countries. The preponderance of 'primate' cities seems to be a tendency that less clearly replicates the Western historical experience, representing another outcome of uneven growth. However, it has been noted recently that, mainly in Latin American countries, the urban process is diversifying to mid-size cities (although the 'primate city' in most cases continues to be the cultural, administrative and industrial center of the nation). The phenomenon of 'urban primacy' is being significantly elucidated by theorists working within the modernization paradigm. They also do the same with another imbalance: urban-bias development. The urban-versus-rural bias controversy started when Michael Lipton (1977) accused cities of sucking from the countryside the resources necessary for development. Persuasive attacks on Lipton's approach affirm that "explosive urban growth cannot be stopped or even controlled through policies favoring the rural part of the economy" (Stern *et al.* 1991, 24). Urban and rural investments, Stern *et al.* advise, are not an either/or choice, they are complementary (ibid., 25).

Urban studies of this type have, in addition, suggested that modernization theory provides some preventive remedies to overurbanization. Urban experts use as basis of comparison

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[3]In Saudi Arabia, for instance, the process of modernization has been retarded. Some aspects of traditional societies such as the close association between religion and political power coexist with modern industry and high levels of financial capital.

the urban experience in First World countries, in relation to different levels of industrialization. It has been noted that Third World countries have a lower degree of industrialization than that which characterized First World countries at comparable levels of urbanization. Experience demonstrates that if urban growth comes too rapidly and too soon, in many cases it precludes the regular and planned provision of urban infrastructure, education, health services, transport, and communication networks (Timberlake and Kentor 1983, 491). As a matter of fact, many Third World governments are unable to support infrastructure and provide economic and social programs to assimilate massive rural-urban migration (which at the same time entails a loss of potential agricultural output).

Most urban studies, embedded in the modernization paradigm, hold that the more developed urban systems are (e.g., improved infrastructure and services), the more likely the cities are to absorb urban surplus labor. By supporting the growth of cities with the creation of more jobs, imbalances of uneven urbanization are thought to disappear eventually. The basis of this assumption is essentially the fact that rich countries have greater resources to spend on infrastructure, and that urban development is encouraged by economic growth.[4]

This discussion recognizes that economic development has an obvious, but complex, correlation with urbanization. In order to understand the nature of the above described imbalances, it becomes necessary to include a review of theories of development.[5] Attention is to be given to one persistent advice: "the roots of the urban question should be sought in the forces [and structures] of the economy" (Angotti 1987, 135).

[4] It is important to take into account that this kind of 'developmentalist' assumption of modernization theory dominates urban studies, even influencing social sciences (Smith 1996:4).

[5] This review gives full credit to the attempts of a new school of thought devoted to deconstructing the development discourse. According to a group of mainly Third World scholars, development has been in a state of crisis since the 70s. Since the 80s, critical theorists of development have been working to conceptualize new designs for social change according to the Third World experience (see Esteva, G. 1992; Escobar, A. 1984 and Amir, S. 1990).

According to early theories belonging to the modernization paradigm, underdevelopment was only the starting stage of all societies. Certain stages of economic growth were to be followed in order to achieve development. The first theoretical attempt to solve the traditional-modern dichotomy is formed in The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto by Walt W. Rostow (1960). The main argument of this study maintains that the evolution of societies is distinguished by five stages of economic development. In Rostow's view, all societies started from the traditional stage and the best way for coping and speeding up the transition to the more advanced stages was to follow a similar path of change to that pursued by the 'developed' capitalist countries (Kay 1989, 7).[6] Although this mainstream development approach has adjusted through time, one assumption still dominates. (Not coincidentally, this assumption happens to be shared by the modernization theory of social change.) There is a tendency to blame exclusively internal constraints for the failure of societies to develop from the traditional underdeveloped stage to the modern-industrial stage. The solution to 'underdevelopment' lies partly in international assistance since, as this theory stresses, 'development' was achieved first in Western societies and other societies can learn from that experience. In essence, the modernization theory of development advocates that progress will eventually come about with transfer of technology, and diffusion of ideology, from the First to the Third World.

If the European and North American model were to be strictly followed, as early modernization theorists suggested, “that implies that urbanization was tied to industrialization and economic growth” (Smith 1996, 4). Modernization started to seem unidirectional, for it tended to equate growth with development. By the 70s, the first decade of crisis of the development discourse, it was obvious that urbanization and growth were “two different processes and did not necessarily coincide” (Lewellen 1995, 57). As noted above, modernization theorists had a hard time accounting for social inequalities within the Third World and among the players in the international economic

[6] Based on the fundamentals of the traditional economics of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, modernization theory greatly influenced in the past development policies throughout the world.

system. Gross national product, for instance, did not reflect the internal dynamics of income distribution and the global process of capital accumulation. The roots of 'underdevelopment' and uneven urbanization, since some thirty years ago, seem to be more deep.

A revitalized consensus among social scientists emerged in the 70s: the process of city growth in the Third World, in both structural form and social consequences, differed from urbanization in the 'developed world' (Smith 1996, 5). Several urban scholars started to agree that, in order to avoid the vicious circle of poverty and inequality, the problem should be viewed from a broader perspective. It was now clear that problems were also, and perhaps fundamentally, structural; that meant they had to do with the ways that societies and economies were organized. It was time to stop viewing the Third World's rapid urbanization only as a barrier to development; it could be equally useful to regard it as a consequence of the latter as well. Third World urbanization began to be seen by some as "just one aspect on the overall economic and political crisis of capitalism in the Third World" (Angotti 1987, 135). From then on, Third World urbanization might not only be a matter of economic development *per se*, but a process closely related to the external relationships through which nations achieve such development. Consequently, it is relevant to observe how societies have developed differently with the global expansion of capitalism. Thus, among other concepts, 'mode of production' was added as a variable for the study of the urban phenomenon. Using a Marxist approach, Manuel Castells concluded that in order to explain growing imbalances, Third World urbanization could be understood with the concept of 'dependent urbanization' (Castells 1977). Castells's first approach to include the concept of 'dependency' in the urban question is not only recognized by, but also highly influential in most contemporary urban studies.[7]

2.3 Dependency

It is rightly said that our world is organized economically in a complex relationship of multinational inter-dependence. The Third World, on the one hand, depends on what the

First World can give: (1) foreign investment to keep the economic machine working (i.e., improving equipment and providing the expertise necessary to maintain a competitive industrial plant); (2) military support to ensure political stability, regardless of the level of democracy reached by the state; and (3) the most recent form of dependency: the foreign debt that has grown significantly over the last two decades (ibid., 146). In return, economic development of the First World countries is dependent on Third World surplus for: (1) markets for the commodities they produce, markets that are much greater than their limited ones; (2) cheap labor, as opposed to the high wages paid to First World workers empowered by strong labor unions; and (3) raw materials which, when existent, national policies protect (Brewer 1980, 76).

In this global inter-dependence, the fact that First World countries and multinational corporations are dependent on the Third World from a position of power is usually overlooked. In contrast, Third World countries have less room to define the kind of political economy needed for development. [8] The basic characteristics of this relationship are best defined by one of the early scholars of dependency:

> Dependency is a conditioning situation . . . a relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the world trading system becomes a dependent relationship when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries...
>
> (Dos Santos 1973, 76).

This uneven nature of inter-dependence must be taken into account along with another important fact: relations of dependency did not change with the national independence of the Third World, neither are they being transformed in the aftermath of the demise of the

[7]Smith uses a comparative political economic approach that conceptualizes "uneven development and inequality as inevitable result of the expansion of the capitalist world-system" (Smith 1996:7).
[8]The best example is the one cited by Lewellen (1995, 9): "If Chile decides to nationalize its copper mines, the United States, and the multinationals centered there, have many alternatives: an embargo to destroy the heavy dependent Chilean economy, a cutoff of foreign loans and aid, manipulation of world copper prices, a shift of purchasing to another copper-producing country such as Zaire, or even the secret destabilization of the government." This author sharply points out that all these were used against Chile between 1970 and 1973.

Second World,[9] nor will they in the close future. The power of the present structures of dependency have even exceeded the predictions of *Dependencia y Desarrollo* (Cardoso and Faletto 1969), the first comprehensive attempt to establish dependency theory.

Dependency theory inherited its fundamental premises from Lenin's theory of imperialism, and more directly from the 1940-50s Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA, or CEPAL in Spanish and Portuguese acronyms). This UN agency grouped Latin American economists and social scientists who began to focus on international capitalism as the source of underdevelopment. They found that the world had been divided between an undeveloped 'periphery' and a developed 'center'. According to this school, when both sides exchange what they can produce most economically (i.e., on the basis of comparative advantage) and purchase needed goods with that money, the core benefits most. The periphery mainly sells agricultural and mineral products (and more recently labor force and low-tech manufacture too) to the core at a relatively lower price than it imports (high-tech) manufactured goods. Powerful unions in industrialized countries serve as a pressure for driving wages up that are to be compensated with raising prices of manufactured products. Prices of Third World production are kept cheap by a large and therefore low-paid labor supply.

The ECLA school, often also called the Structuralism school of development, also denounced industrialized countries for keeping the benefits of technical progress to themselves. Meanwhile, in the peripheral countries, new technologies were largely imported and mainly confined to export production. In ECLA's view, the problem of "unequal terms of trade not only perpetuates the asymmetry between center and periphery but also deepens it" (Kay 1989, 29). The problem becomes a political one: the gap continues to widen as societies in general become richer and the demand for manufactured goods increases in relation to the stable consumption of basic goods. As a

[9]Although in the post Cold-War era there are less reasons for First World economies to keep providing economic assistance and military protection to Third World governments, the power of the International Monetary Fund to impose a singular economic model in dependent countries is "unrivaled" (Lewellen 1995, 252).

result, no matter what arduous attempts the peripheral countries make to produce more, their low revenues and low wages cannot buy them technological benefits to compete internationally.[10]

In short, while modernization theorists tend to emphasize the internal constraints of individual nations, dependency theorists stress the international context of national 'underdevelopment'. They maintain that "countries are condemned to impoverishment not only because they lack technology or capital but because of their placement within the structure of world capitalism" (Lewellen 1995, 50). However, not everybody working in this paradigm has been pessimistic. *Dependentistas* have worked for decades to propose alternatives to overcome underdevelopment. In the past, dependency theory strongly influenced Third World economic policies. Approaches varied from reforming the international structures of capitalism and eventually break dependency (e.g., import-substitution political economy put in practice for almost four decades in Latin America and Asia), to 'delinking from world capitalism' (as did the socialist revolutions of the 60s and 70s in Africa, Asia and Latin America).[11]

An ideological and comprehensive analysis of political economy is avoided at this point; the effects of dependency can be studied in innumerable ways and perspectives. What this exploration is most concerned with is the effects of dependent development on urbanization. As has been stressed, the ultimate goal is to regard the rural migrant as a component of the economic system. Dependency theory can serve as a tool to understand the class definition of migrants, since they are linked to other strata of the urban society through internationally established structures.

The dependency school has tended to analyze rural-urban migration by means of the Marxist concept of 'relative surplus labor'. It has been noted that the rapid increase in the

[10]These kind of demands, formally developed by radical economic theorists, constitute the contemporary attack on capitalism. See Castro F. (1983) The World Economic and Social Crisis: Report to the Seven Summit Conference on Non-Aligned Countries. La Havana: Office of Publications, Cuban Council of State; quoted in Lewellen 1995, p.60.

urban labor force is not being absorbed by the post-W.W.II industrialization process in the Third World. Instead of development and integration, the capital-intensive industrialization process has led to further income maldistribution and the marginalization of sectors of the population from the fruits of technological progress (Kay 1989, 91). The result is that rural migrants, unable to integrate into the economic system, are converted into urban marginals (ibid., 101). Marxist arguments on marginality emphasize the various mechanisms of exploitation of the marginal population and stress their significance for the process of accumulation and reproduction of the capitalist system (ibid., 122). For dependency theory, the problem of marginality is structural, as it is embedded within Third World processes of dependent capitalist development (Stavenhagen 1974).

Some scholars have analyzed the effects of economic dependency on overurbanization, undertaking empirical work supported by cross-national data. Timberlake and Kentor, for instance, demonstrates that the more foreign capital is invested into Third World economies, the bigger the urban surplus labor grows. They do so by measuring the increase of the ratio between the mainly informal service and the formal manufacture sectors of the economy (Timberlake and Kentor 1983, 494-504). Some other theorists have gone beyond the surplus-labor pitfall, by reconsidering the structural role of urban marginals in national development. Portes (1981) prefers to speak of them as "casual wage labor, self-employed in petty production and trade," perhaps because of their subsidiary functions for other urban strata. With no fiscal regulation, the informal sector basically provides cheap products and services to the benefit of the middle class.[12]

This last fact points to one of the weaknesses of dependency analysis. Dependency theorists' success resides in a critical insight into the structural underpinnings of society; the theory emphasizes external structures of the national economy over internal ones.

[11] The first dependency theorist who suggested delinking from world capitalism was André Gunder Frank (1969).

[12] The debate about the economic functions of the urban surplus labor continues, but for consistency's sake the term 'marginal' will be subsequently used, as the analysis goes beyond the economic role of rural migrants.

However, other internal factors, beyond their international causes, should be considered as well. The informal sector in the Third World, for instance, is an internal product that still operates relatively independent from the global economy.

2.4 Internal colonialism

Dependency theory also underestimates the importance of other domestic factors such as the internal evolution of societal systems, particularly evident in the most urbanized regions of the periphery. Beyond the international economy, there are also social and cultural influences that should be considered. As a case in point, scholars detected the particularities that have favored the strengthening of elites throughout Latin America for centuries (Sanjek 1994). Inherited from European conquest, or even from before, as some would argue, cultural constructs of domination and exploitation have determined local systems of social stratification that still prevail. This phenomenon is known as internal colonialism and it is considered as purely local. The fact that such structures were "developed historically from Western expansion does not make them any less real or less internal now" (Lewellen 1995, 69). One can expect that decision-making by the domestic elites is ultimately determined by their own interests of power and position, rather than being intended to benefit or support multinational capital.

The theory of internal colonialism started in the 60's from a radical interpretation of Latin American history, the region of the Third World where national independence was first achieved. The most direct source of influence for those who first studied internal colonialism was the writings of a group of intellectuals called *indigenistas* (nativists).[13] Although the indigenistas had no clear political program, they aimed to change the prejudiced, racist, and negative view of indigenous people in society. Internal colonialism evolved from a synthesis of this indigenism and a traditional notion of colonialism: "with

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[13]The *indigenista* movement arose during the first decades of this century in various Latin American countries, especially Mexico and Peru. Besides these two countries, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Bolivia were given particular relevance for having a large indigenous or native population. The members of this group were 'pro-Indian' in the sense that they attacked those who exclusively valued the Hispanic heritage (Kay 1989, 62-3).

the disappearance of the direct domination of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerged" (Gonzalez-Casanova 1965, 27). This theory complemented the class analysis of dependency theorists by showing that the social achievements of urban marginals are not only constrained by their unfortunate role within the economic system. Cultural components count as well for the creation of class divisions and for the articulation of class consciousness.

Internal colonialism also complements dependency through a more conspicuous concept than culture. Sunkel argued that a world-economy based on transnational operations, as he saw it back in the 70s, caused a 'national disintegration' in the Third World, polarizing the societies of poor countries. He distinguished two social sectors in Third World nations: "the one which is integrated to the transnational system and the other which is excluded from this system and which constitutes the marginal sector composed of the majority of the population" (Sunkel 1972, 36). The former is represented by the so-called '*comprador* elite' (or 'transnational capitalist class'): local investors and managers of multinational subsidiaries in the Third World. Being generally the wealthiest people in the nation and/or the oligarchy that rules the country, this minority maintains a great deal of power over the national economy. As comprador elites are directly responsible for procuring the nation with indispensable foreign investment, they sometimes even undermine the political power of the state (Lewellen 1995, 129-32).

It is becoming evident that national disintegration, coupled with the enhancement of global communications, expands the possibilities for an internationally-based class society. Disparities of living standards, in most cases, increase more within the peripheral country than between this country and the countries of the center (Lewellen 1995, 62). Using contemporary terms, the world society is being polarized between the small but overseas-connected "global village" and a huge but neighborhood-based "rooted metropolis" (Fuentes 1985, 69).

2.5 The World-System Perspective

As internal colonialism is based on a critical view of Latin American history, history of the global economy is paramount for world-system theory. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the theory's main advocate, the world economy is...

> ...the only system in the world, dominating over and above socio-political spheres and by definition, capitalist in form. It has been with us since the capitalist economic system emerged in the sixteenth century; it defines only one economy of exchange and one division of labor. (Wallerstein 1979, 293)

Wallerstein's approach to the world-system has something in common with the modernization paradigm. As world capitalism has been expanded since its emergence, world-system theorists have found it useful to delineate stages or phases of capitalist development (Smith 1996, 11). At the same time, this influential approach to development also acknowledges the importance of global structures of power and dominance. Structuralism and historicism (for the latter, special concern is given to European expansion since the fifteenth century) are two analytical tools that world-system theorists seemingly inherited from early *dependentistas*. Also like dependency theory, this theory stresses that external conditions are most responsible for the development of the periphery, but it goes further. World-system theory transcends the center-periphery dichotomy of dependency by introducing another element: the 'semi-periphery'. Basically, this new category is represented by few units of the Third World (e.g., Taiwan, South Korea, Brazil and Mexico) and of the extinct Second World, but it also contains First World economies undergoing downward mobility in the international system. The theory also recognizes the possibility of upward mobility, where countries can move from the underdeveloped periphery to the partially developed semi-periphery to the developed core. As long as this hierarchical stratification is maintained, after nation states exchange positions, the system can survive. Therefore a "structural necessity of hierarchies within highly differentiated systems" is posited (Smith 1996, 21).

However, world-system theorists have little to say about the direct effects of structures of hierarchy and domination (at all levels) on marginal populations in the Third World. This criticism is more pertinent to the world-system approach than to the other theories reviewed above. This theory can also be more vulnerable to another claim: much theorizing "tends to be at such level of abstraction that it is difficult to apply in specific cases or to meaningful test empirically" (Lewellen 1995, 67). Reality, as observed in local communities throughout the Third World, has proved to be more explicit than abstractions such as those of the world-system approach. Still, the main merit of world-system theory has been its ability to synthesize elements from other theories of development.

A synthetic theory of development may include elements from all the reviewed theories. Internal colonialism provides an insight into the history of social and cultural structures at the local level, since it explores the links between class and ethnicity (Kay 1989, 65). Dependency theory contributes with its emphasis on historical processes and international structures of the world economy.[14] On the other hand, dependency's overemphasis on the external is balanced by the internal perspective of modernization theory. Other elements should also be contained in the search to keep redefining a synthetic theory of development (although the option of totally dismissing 'development' is also latent, if its discourse is to be replaced by a new criteria of sociocultural change). Modernization theory successfully addresses specific variables such as transportation and communications systems and technology. Sophisticated analysis within this approach is perceptive of local barriers to top-down development, whether cultural or even psychological.

In sum, the approach of this thesis is based on the belief that structural aspects of development, such as the world-economy, ought to be reviewed as well. It is from the

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[14] Worth mentioning is that what most amalgamates the dependency paradigm is a hopeful recognition: "the drain of resources from the periphery to the core and the capital dependency are neither inevitable nor irreversible processes, they are rather vulnerable to change and could be influenced by human direction" (Angotti 1987, 142).

global perspective, and with due consideration for specific local aspects, that Third World urbanization should be analyzed.

2.6 From the Macro to the Micro Level

Although theory may seem too abstract and remote from the flesh-and-blood realities of ordinary people, global agents of cultural change should be kept in mind. Any holistic analysis should avoid the psychological reductionism that views societies as nothing more than multiple individual actions taken together. It is necessary to recognize that the world system sets the broad parameters of processes of change, such as urbanization and economic development. It can be said that the sociocultural environment of rural migrants in the Third World significantly depends on economic, political factors that lie behind population dynamics. After all, decisions made at the household level, such as fertility or family budgeting, "are the result of complicated processes strongly influenced by macrostructural contexts of political and economic realities" (Smith 1996, 7).

It is one process in particular that concerns this thesis, the cultural adaptation process of rural migrants (CAP). The CAP consists of a series of mechanisms that people gradually develop in order to solve problems or attain goals in the urban milieu. Migrants rely essentially on the 'baggage of culture' they carry from the countryside to the urban environment, and which is ready to be transformed in the city. In order to further clarify this abstraction, a definition of the term 'culture' seems pertinent. "Culture is a collective and integrating whole consisting of learned ideas, behaviors, and products, all related to the needs of human groups" (Naylor 1995, 18-19). Such 'whole' is a coherent system in which people's concerns generate ideas, from which follow a set of behaviors and from which physical or social products result.[15] These three components of culture can be identified in the CAP, since rapid changes in ideas, behaviors and products follow migration. Switching to an urban lifestyle means transforming conceptions which will in turn motivate decisions to alter social and material products (e.g., housing). In other

[15] These general components of culture are dependent on each other and together produce the coherent whole of culture. Naylor further elaborates that individuals are not born with culture 'they have to learn it' (Naylor 1995, 18).

words, by using and modifying culture, migrants accommodate to a new and complex environment in the city.

One can further understand the CAP if one uses Sklair's (1995) analytical framework to comprehend the global system. As mentioned in Chapter One, in Sklair's view, sociocultural change can be associated with economic, political and cultural-ideological transnational practices (TNPs). Outlining the conditions in which the first ones (economic TNPs) take place, was just done in this chapter with the review of the theories of development. The context in which the second ones (political TNPs) take place will be presented with an overview of Mexican political history in the next chapter. Above these two, cultural-ideological TNPs are crucial for the study of the CAP; later, in the analysis of findings, the intention will be to decipher migrant housing as revealing its user's intention to achieve cultural adaptation (through engaging in the 'culture-ideology of consumerism', in Sklair's terms). It will be discussed, in chapters Four and Five, how the CAP is merely an expression of migrants' desire to become part of an ostensibly consumerist urban society. The level of 'cultural adaptation', being a social construct, is not tangible, as are 'economic and political integration' of migrants to urban society. Cultural adaptation is then, the symbolic, but also real intention of migrants who hold the desire to share a sense of 'belonging' to the urban culture.

As the discussion unfolds, three major concerns arise. One is the relation between the CAP of migrants and the improvement of their quality of life: is their adaptation to the urban culture bringing about complete integration to the society, or are migrants only showing apparent success? Second, if <u>collectivity</u> is the nature of rural life and success in the city is achieved <u>individually</u>, how does the transition take place in migrants lives? And third, being no longer ‘traditional’ and not ‘modern’ yet, what sorts of cultural products do migrants invent in order to survive outside these two categories? How is ‘modernity’ reproduced in their urban environment according to their ‘traditional’ interpretation? These questions will be addressed in chapters Four and Five but, prior to that, additional background information is needed.

After articulating the economic realities of Third World migrants in a theoretical context, it is now suggested that comprehension of the CAP can be also broadened by placing the community of Chalco in place and time. The following chapter, besides describing the methodology used in the case study, places the case in the context of the urbanization process of Mexico. The argument that will be developed in Chapter Three intends, just as much as this theoretical framework, to support the critical analysis of subsequent chapters.

It is important to keep in mind that the understanding of the CAP can, and should, be enriched by reviewing influences on sociocultural change at all levels (which in the findings of this thesis will be done from the local to the global). For instance, cultural patterns in the community of Chalco cannot be understood without considering ethnic relations in Mexico or the economic role migrants play in society, as the theories of internal colonialism and dependency respectively stress. Nor can the phenomenon of migrant housing be grasped before understanding the dominant discourse of change, elaborated by modernization theorists, on which the Third World development process depends.

Chapter Three Mexico, Mexico City and Chalco in Historical Perspective

Introduction

As it was outlined in the previous chapters, the sociocultural change of rural-urban migrants is defined to a certain degree by the political economic macrostructures within which societies function. It was also discussed that urbanization is a process highly influenced by, and influential on, the process of economic development. To illustrate these two ideas, this chapter addresses both economic development and urbanization processes in the particular case of contemporary Mexico, from the early 40s to the present. Shifts in the world economic system have historically had an impact on Mexico's political economy. Consequently, this overview correlates these shifts chronologically. By considering both global and local levels, this exploration aims to be consistent with the theoretical framework of the previous chapter. In the need of a global vision to better understand sociocultural change, international 'causes of under-development' should receive as much attention as national 'barriers to development'.

The contemporary history of Mexico is briefly described in the first part of the chapter; the main foci will be the aftermaths of national economic policies and their effects on civil society. The second part of the chapter deals with the effects of the economy on one particular segment of civil society: Chalco, site of this thesis' case study. Since the study will avoid isolating this community in the exploration of its culture, economic rates include other strata of society as well.

Macro-economic indicators in this review will be associated with social changes that affected rural migrants (such as class formation, income distribution or quality of life) as members of the urban society. Migrants' economic role in society is considered as crucial in this thesis. However, sociocultural sources of

change endemic to Mexico should also be incorporated into the analysis (Chapters Four and Five). Just before that, a detailed description of the research methodology is provided in the last part of this chapter.

3.1 Historical Review

3.1.1 1940-80: The industrialization period

After post-revolutionary regimes (1917-1940) had successfully attained political stability, a prerequisite to modernize Mexico, the 1940-80 cabinets consistently devoted their efforts to integrate the country with the industrialized world. The development process in that period has been judged by most historians as successful, particularly in terms of economic growth. The 6.5 percent average annual growth of the GNP from 1940 to 1980 was compared to successful economies such as (post-war) West Germany and Japan, or East Asia which had an average growth of GNP of 7.3 for the same years (Castells 1993, 35; Levy and Szekély 1977, 127). The merit of such unprecedented growth can be attributed to joint efforts from both sides, the state and civil society, to overcome historical shortcomings.

On the one hand, the institutionalization of the Mexican Revolution provided the political stability to put in practice an economic strategy of continuous growth. Like many other Latin American nations, modern Mexico relied on state-regulated and inward-looking economic policies (as recommended by dependency theorists in the 60s and 70s; see Chapter Two). It is undeniable that such a protective strategy (based on a domestic market which gradually replaced imported products with those produced locally) allowed Mexico access to the world-economy (Castells 1993, 29).

On the other hand, the 1910 Mexican Revolution stimulated an increased sense of nationalism. The cultural revolution experienced by all Mexicans after the insurgence inspired the work of painters, writers and musicians who intended to

awaken the pride of society towards Mexico's pre-colonial heritage. There was a general belief that integrating indigenous people into the nation-building process would mean the achievement of a harmonious society. In the aftermath of the revolution, Mexicans were working out an alternative attitude towards progress that included those who, since the conquest, had been excluded from the project of development.

However, such revolutionary fervor was to be gradually tamed by subsequent expansionist regimes. Post-war administrations in Mexico devoted their energy to providing the social stability needed to obtain the external support necessary to pursue economic growth. This replaced the need for social change that the revolution was supposed to be working towards. Still, self-esteem and nationalism, along with government protectionism, were important impetuses to realize impressive social achievements. With a population increase of around 40 million in absolute numbers, schooling for more than 18 million and public health for 28 million were provided in Mexico in the industrialization period (Levy and Szekély 1983, 142).

Despite of the fact that modernization of the Mexican economic system aimed to procure sufficient growth to benefit all, the strategy that supported it was nonetheless selective. Most social expenditures of the government favored populations in urban areas only. *Alemanista*[1] regimes conducted their affairs with the belief that, by favoring the expansion of major industrial centers, contemporary Mexican society might eventually benefit from 'a bigger pie' (Levy and Szekély 1983, 34-5). This policy was partially successful because, far from

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[1] Levy (1983) distinguishes two governance approaches in post-revolutionary Mexico. One the one hand, the *alemanista* presidents, named after Miguel Alemán (1946-52), strongly favored industrialization, economic growth and business interests. On the other, the *cardenista* presidents, named after Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40), who was committed to the masses and, personified the equality promised by the Revolution, favored anti-expansionist political economy and a rural-bias approach to development that represented the left in contemporary Mexico. In 1983 Levy summarized, as it seems to be the case today, that "the contemporary regime (since 1940) has inclined decidedly toward the alemanista position" (Levy 1983, 47).

achieving an egalitarian society, two new social classes were consolidated in modern Mexico: the urban middle class and the new working class (Escobar and Roberts 1991). The latter was defined thanks to the economic growth generated by the industrialization boom. By the 1970s, most of the urban-working class, although facing the under-equipped environment of recent urbanization, was already engaged in formal manufacturing labor and enjoying the public social security system.

On the other hand, the urban middle-class was not only defined but firmly expanded. The number of white collar positions, which by 1980 were mainly occupied by middle-class professionals, managers, and small entrepreneurs, increased far more rapidly than the number of direct manufacturing positions (Escobar and González 1995, 59). Moreover, the Mexican *petite bourgeoisie* took advantage of the generalized structure of subsidies and services (e.g., basic consumer goods, public education and transportation) that were apparently designed to alleviate urban marginalization. Institutional attempts to challenge marginality, i.e., the presence of residual in-migrants who cannot be accommodated by the production system, seemed to have failed for the first time in the 1940-80 period.

The post-W.W.II industrial expansion had widespread repercussions upon the population distribution and the growth of Mexico's primate city. The proportion of the national population living in urban areas (defined as settlements with more than 10 000 people) rose from 22 percent in 1940 to 48.3 percent in 1980 (Scott 1982, 53; quoted in Ward 1990, 7). Mexico became predominantly urban, i.e., with the majority of its total population living in cities, around 1960 (Pick and Butler 1997, 37). Between 1940-80, Mexico City grew from 3.5 to 16 million people in size. In the same period, the city's population doubled every twelve or

thirteen years and grew at a rate of around 5.5 percent per annum (Ward 1990, 33).

The urban bias of expansionist regimes during these four decades marginalized 10 percent of both rural and urban indigenous populations in the country as a whole (Levy and Szekély 1977, 142). Contrary to the original intention of the Mexican Revolution, injustice for those people continued to deepen as a result of their exclusion from the national political economy. Responsibility for this inequality does not lie simply with administrative incompetence, but also with Mexico's traditional economic dependency on the core countries. From a global perspective, as world production started shifting from labor-intensive to capital-intensive methods (and as labor became less competitive as a trading product), such indigenous populations were the first irrelevant residuals of the world system (Castells 1993, 37). Also, on a local level, national disintegration (see Chapter Two), caused by the need to adjust to the new international division of labor, diminished hopes for a more egalitarian society. For instance, as early as 1980, the World Bank admitted that Mexico, despite some improvement in the middle income brackets had "one of the worst profiles of income distribution of any nation on earth" (World Bank 1980, quoted in Levy and Szekély 1983, 143).

Historically, the benefits of growth have certainly been maldistributed in Mexico. However, it must be noted that the polarization of income distribution decelerated particularly during the period of industrial expansion (Levy and Szekély 1977, 143). From 1950 to 1977, there was a significant increase, from 36.7 to 52 per cent, in the share of national income for the middle-class (percentiles 41 to 90). It was accompanied by a stagnation in the share of the low-middle-class (percentiles 21 to 40) and a significant cut from 49 to 36 per cent of the highest 10 percent. Obviously, this redistribution came at the expense of the lowest 10 per cent of the population whose share dropped from 2.4 to 1.1 per cent in the same period (Escobar, A. and Roberts, B. 1991; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 59).

The distribution of GNP in society is not, however, the only indicator to assess quality of life. Other factors such as access to basic services (food, health, education, or transport), in cities as well as in rural areas, have to be considered. According to these parameters, the small decline of income for the richest 10 per cent of the population caused its standards of living to become closer to that of the middle-class. Conversely, an improvement in quality of life was evident for both the working poor and the urban middle-class, thanks to the, already mentioned, reinforcement of the social security system and increasing subsidies. The middle-class appeared to enjoy a better quality of life than the one reflected by its share of national cash income (Escobar and González 1995, 59). The working class also received, although not as much as the middle-class, some of the benefits of Mexico's economic growth. By 1978, at least half of the new Mexican working-class engaged in manufacturing had reached, or surpassed, wage levels which enabled one worker to support a family and enjoyed basic social security provisions for health care and retirement (Boltvinik 1987; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 59). According to the same parameters, the percentage of households considered poor decreased from 80.7 per cent in 1963, to 52.5 per cent in 1981 (Tuiran 1993).

1979-88: The lost decade[2]

In the 80s, Mexico suffered a structural crisis which was mainly caused by changes in the world-system of production. Required to cope with the rise of the post-industrial economy, advanced capitalist societies have undergone a major shift as material production has been displaced by high-tech informational production. This shift has had a negative impact on those economies under-

[2]The 80s has been tagged as the 'lost decade' for many parts of the Third World, since most of what had been gained since the 1970s in terms of wage levels, subsidies and public expenditure, for example, was lost in the crisis.

equipped and under-skilled for the change,[3] a situation that characterizes countries in most of Africa, Asia and the Middle-East and Latin America, particularly in those nations depending on the competence of their industrial plants for the exports of primary commodity products. Oil shocks in Mexico, an economy which relies heavily on oil-production, were accompanied by a steady decline of the GNP in the 1980s. The crisis destroyed hopes and the economic foundation of the import-substitution strategy that had once fostered economic growth. National governments in this decade could no longer support the model that was causing uncontrolled inflation and a weakening of the domestic markets (Fajnzylber 1983; quoted in Castells 1993, 29). During the Mexican 'lost decade', rising prices and declining wages brought about social effects such as increasing levels of unemployment and reduced standards of living (Feldman 1992; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 61). In order to overcome such structural problems the administration of the country instituted heavy borrowing from both the IMF and the World Bank. The situation worsened when the debt burden was supplemented by several drastic devaluations of the peso, corruption, capital outflow and fiscal austerity.

The crisis had substantial consequences for Mexican society. In the 1981-88 period, the percentage of Mexicans considered poor rose from 52.5 to 62.5, an increase of 22 million people in absolute numbers (Hernández 1992; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 61). In 1987, it was considered that 41.3 million Mexicans were unable to satisfy their basic needs, i.e., were poor and that 17.3 million lived in extreme poverty (Escobar and González 1995, 61).[4] Poverty was less pronounced in rural areas than in the fringes of cities, although urban marginals received at least some benefits from urban-bias policies. The economy

[3]The change involves both proportion of GNP and proportion of population involved in such activities. (Castells 1993, 17).

[4] In 1982, a worker needed to spend 45 minutes working at minimum wage to make enough to buy a pound of chicken . By 1989, it took a worker nearly three and a half hours (Russell 1994, 271).

deteriorated so rapidly that investment in urban infrastructure and services failed to prevent the crisis of the formal sector.

As elsewhere in the Third World, the informal economy in Mexico has grown during periods of crisis. In the expansionist phase of industrialization, there was no need for the informal sector to grow in cities because there was enough room to integrate the rural poor into the new working class. In the 1950-80 period, when the industrial plant grew four times its size, informal activities consistently occupied 30 per cent of the economically active urban population (Castells and Portes 1989, 16; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 62). It was not until the lost decade that the informal economy acquired even more significance, both in terms of employment and production. During the 1980-89 period, employment in the informal sector and in small industries grew twice as rapidly as the population of working age and three times as rapidly as the whole population (CEPAL 1992; quoted in Escobar and González 1995, 62). Over ten million under-employed Mexicans, as estimated in the early 90s, were no less affected by the crisis than the peasantry or the unemployed (IMEM 1991, 16; quoted in Russell 1994, 307).

The situation had an international impact; a report by the Pro Human Rights Center summarized the effects of the crisis as "a grave violation of the right of all people to work, health, education, food, and housing" (Proceso 1990, 16). Repeating the pattern of the expansionist period, the quality of life of Mexico's indigenous population was affected as their exclusion from the national development plan continued and their contact with national and international markets increased. More and more, indigenous populations were forced to shift to the production of cash crops, such as coffee and sorghum, leaving fewer food crops and less dietary diversity (Nahmad 1992; quoted in Russell 1994, 274). In the lost decade, especially, the living conditions of twelve of the fifteen million,

either rural or urban, indigenous people led to a vicious circle of malnutrition and disease.[5]

3.1.3 The current development model: neoliberalism

In order to tackle the crisis of the 80s, some countries in Asia experimented with a new model of economic development, which would spread to Southeast Asia and finally to Latin America. Peripheral countries could now become competitive by exporting manufactured goods through the advantage of cost/price differentials vis-à-vis rich economies (Castells 1993, 28). In Latin America, this kind of development ideology has been called neoliberalism, deliberately evoking classic liberal commitments (individual rights, civil liberties, private property) and placing them in the context of the late twentieth-century global capitalism (Imaz 1997, 5). Mexico followed the Latin American initiatives of Chile and Brazil in 1986, guided by a group of technocrats who took drastic steps to open up the country's economy.

The substantial restructuring of the economy explicitly was meant to resume growth on the basis of export industries in agriculture and low-tech manufacturing. Besides, in times when foreign private investment is a driving force of economic growth and consequently of development, low cost of production (especially low wages) becomes the magnet that attracts transnational investors. The global dominance of multinational corporations (MNCs), which quickly incorporate the wealthiest of the Third World business elites, enables them to keep expanding their power over dependent economies. Government deregulation of the economy allows MNCs freedom to operate, enjoying significant advantage over local competitors. In the light of the new international division of labor, the best comparative advantage for Mexico in the global economy is still its low wages.

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[5]The majority of the 56 ethnic groups are settled down in the territories of la Husateca Sierra, Mixteca Cañada, Chiapas, and Oaxaca, although there are also about 1 million pure Indians in Mexico City (Russell 1994, 275).

Core nations have certainly taken advantage of exports from the offshore manufacturing facilities of MNCs. It is undeniable that in-bound US industries settled across the border, the so-called *maquiladoras*,[6] have also been successful at creating jobs in the rapidly industrializing cities of northern Mexico. (Although maquiladoras' poor working conditions and environmental waste are becoming focus of international concern. Moreover, it has been noted that while $23 billion of *maquila* output was added to Mexico's GNP over the first eight months of 1996, only $3.5 billion of the total was actually produced in Mexico; Imaz 1997, 10). The international economic cooperation of *maquiladoras* has also been affirmed by the signing of NAFTA, the economic bloc on which Mexico relies to tackle the global economy. The agreement is expected to give Mexico the benefits of commercial integration with Canada and the US, the two neighbors with whom the country shares one of the most inter-dependent regions of the world. The main purpose of the agreement is to combine, in the long-term, US and Canadian capital and technology and Mexican resources, including labor, "into a powerful global force" (Schultz 1995,131).

Mexico has been a paradise for foreign investment not only because the Mexican government enables multinational firms to pay lower wages, but also in the light of the huge market it represents. Since Mexico signed the GATT accord in 1986, the disappearance of tariff barriers has allowed international retailers to set up shop throughout the country. Since then, imports dominate the domestic market, while the domestic industry has been scarcely able to export. Billions of dollars have been poured into Mexico, but very little of the foreign investments is being

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[6] *Maquiladoras* are US firms operating on the Mexican side of the border, assembling products for the US market. The legal basis of the *maquiladora* is the Mexican law which permits owners to import components and machinery duty-free, and to own 100 percent of the production facility (Russell 1994, 202). *Maquiladora* industry, perfectly structured and systematized with the local government, is so efficient that it can be said that the concept is now the most successful example of the decentralization of MNCs through the Third World.

used for productive purposes.[7] This commercial imbalance, i.e., the preponderance of financial capital over investment in productive capital, has been the pattern of peripheral or semi-peripheral economies, such as Mexico, that decide to adopt the neoliberal model of development.

Besides hoping for positive results from regional integration with Mexico's North-American neighbors, recent national policies have relied on the *Programa Nacional de Solidaridad,* the National Solidarity Program. Solidaridad can be said to be one of the most innovative and controversial social programs in the history of Third World development. The plan, which operated in the 1988-94 presidential period, was based on the following organizational principles: (1) respect for social will and existing community organizations, (2) local participation in the design and execution of projects, (3) *convenios*, or signed agreements, which spell out community as well as government responsibilities, and (4) open, honest, and efficient management practices. For the six years the program operated, Solidaridad built or renovated schools for 10 million children; distributed milk to 7 million; built or renovated health facilities to care for 6 million; provided electricity to 11 million and water to 8 million; and constructed 14 000 km of roads and renovated 110 000 km more (Russell 1994, 1985).[8]

General optimism based on the apparent success of Solidaridad and on the expected benefits of NAFTA triggered speculations that Mexico was becoming 'the next tiger'.[9] Such a goal has still not been achieved. The first fruits of *maquiladora* industry or the selective achievements of Solidaridad have not successfully responded to the growing demands of marginalized Mexicans. The

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[7]Under the Salinas administration, there was some investment in export-oriented automobile production, in the *maquiladoras* and in few others manufacturing sectors, but most of the resources where channeled into the stock market, where benefits are not taxed and transactions need not be reported to fiscal authorities (Imaz 1997, 9).

[8]Institutionalized in the new Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), Solidaridad remains the object of heated debate (See Russell 1994, 277; Cornelius et al. 1994).

[9]Following the four 'South-East Asian Tigers': Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea.

immediate outcome of the failure to include all sectors of civil society in the political economic plan was the crisis of Mexico's political system, started in 1994 (only in that year, the system, that had remained relatively stable for some seventy years, underwent a peasant uprising in Chiapas, two major political assassinations, kidnappings of important business figures and narco-traffic related violence). This political crisis had direct consequences on the national economy. In addition to the lack of domestic savings, volatile multinational capital discouraged generalized expectations when it flew. Just when Mexico seemed to be 'entering the First World', the country fell into a period of crisis once again in December 1994.

Over the last three years, Mexicans have been caught in an economic downturn of unprecedented proportions. The peso devaluation of December 1994 and the ensuing capital outflow and stock market crash plunged the Mexican economy into its deepest depression since the 1930s. In a matter of days, investors reacted to the devaluation by removing an estimated $6 billion of foreign and domestic capital (the same amount as the line of credit that US extended Mexico to stabilize the economy; Imaz 1997, 7); within two months of the devaluation, the value of the currency had declined by more than half; within four months the level of unemployment had doubled; inflation jumped from 7 percent in 1994 to 52 percent in 1995; and the GNP had declined by 6.9 percent at the year end. The economic crisis saw the collapse of the country's internal market, the virtual disappearance of credit for small and medium-size businesses, a dramatic reduction of formal employment and an alarming growth of poverty. Twelve months after the peso debacle, an estimated 75 percent of Mexican families could not afford the 'basic basket' of goods and services considered necessary to bring a family above the official poverty line (Imaz 1997, 9). It now takes 4.8 minimum wages for an urban family of four to live above the poverty line, but the average wage is between two and three minimum wages.

Although presently there is some optimism about Mexico's economic recovery (as is traditionally the case in cyclical Mexico every six years, i.e., at the same rhythm as presidential terms), it remains questionable whether that speculative recovery extends to the social and economic conditions of the poor. The meaning of the neoliberal model to civil society can best be illustrated by the last available data on the effects of Mexico's economic policies in the era of Solidaridad.

Typical of the contemporary pattern, wealth distribution in the early 1990s continued to polarize, further dashing hopes for a real egalitarian society. The richest ten percent of the population continued their process of capital accumulation, earning fifty-five percent more in 1992 than in 1977, in real terms. At the end of 1990, this elite received forty-one percent of the GNP, as opposed to the bottom twenty percent of the population which only received three percent (Proceso 1990, 37). The share of the remaining seventy percent of the population also declined. Middle-income households became more similar to urban working-class households, when total household and per capita incomes are taken into account (Escobar and González 1995, 68).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the concentration of wealth is extreme. Less than 8000 accounts, 1500 of which are foreign, control more than 94 percent of the publicly traded stock shares; and the number of millionaires (as measured in US dollars) increased from one in 1990 to twenty-eight in late 1994 (Russell 1994, 279; Schultz 1995, 196). In contrast, and similar to former post-revolutionary policies, the innovative strategy pursued to tackle modernization continues to alienate indigenous and peasant populations from the project of national development. Despite Solidarity's investment in incorporating indigenous peoples into the program, actual spending was only a little over one dollar per person per year (Russell 1994, 283-4). As a consequence, even government institutions have raised the call for alarm. In 1990, the National Indigenous

Institute (INI) declared that 98 percent of the indigenous population of Mexico lived in poverty.

Large numbers of marginalized Mexican Indians live not only in the countryside but also in squatter settlements on the margins of cities. In Mexico City, impoverished masses were forced to exchange city slums for new ones on the urban periphery because of the unemployment stimulated by the crisis of the 80s. Since then, urban marginals have out-migrated and have practically appropriated the suitable lands on the east of the valley of Mexico.[10] The only possible option seemed to be squatting, or illegally buying *ejido* lands, avoiding high rents and hoping for future land legalization.[11]

As they established residence in the outskirts, by the late 80s urban marginals in Mexico City had also consolidated grass-roots organizations that were to form alliances with opposition parties. In the light of such dissidence, there was the need for the 1988-94 presidential cabinet to design a plan to weaken political participation, and to transform social unrest into populist base for the government. President Carlos Salinas developed, and officially inaugurated with a speech, his campaign of 'social modernization', in a squatter settlement in which social mobilization started to worry many (Cornelius et al. 1995, 6). This community, Chalco, is the location of the case study of this thesis.

3.2 Chalco, Site of the Case Study

El Valle de Chalco Solidaridad, which officially named after the government program which intervened in the community, is situated on the East side of Mexico City (Figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

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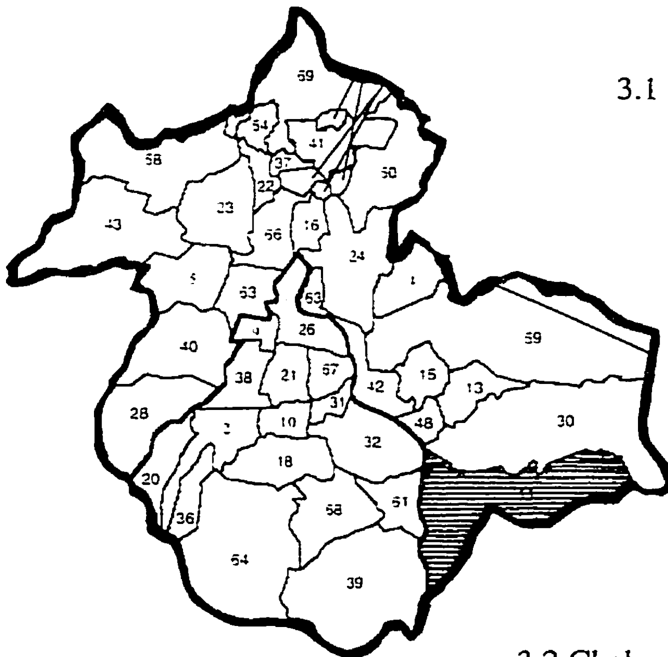
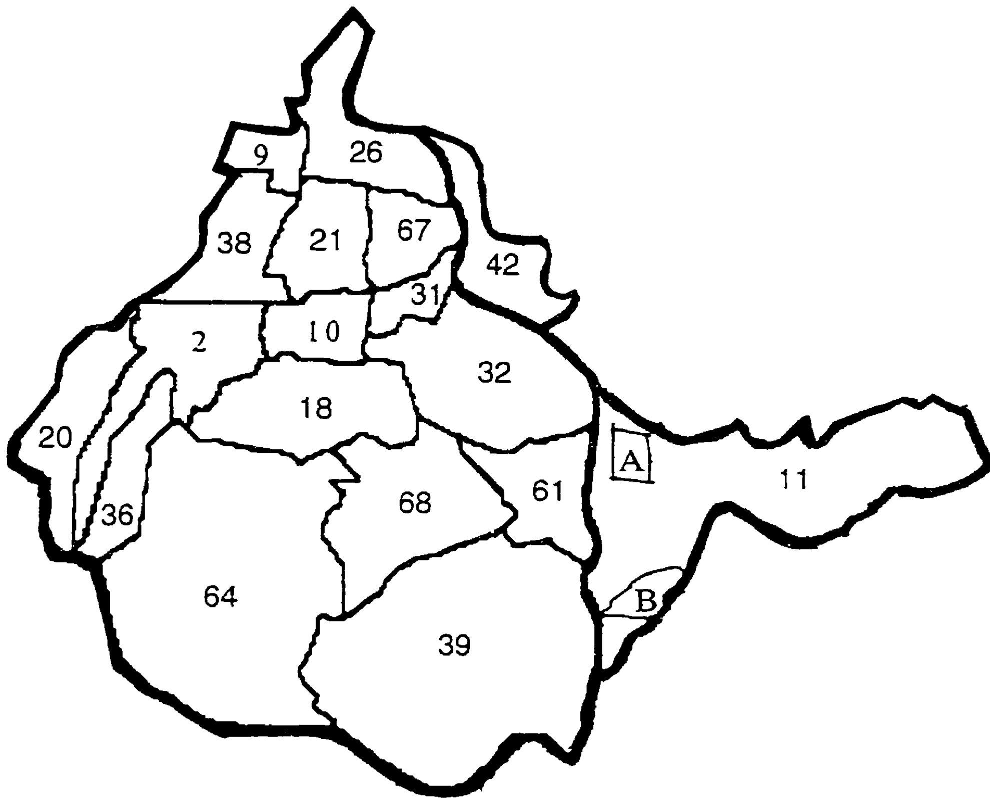
[10]Although places like Chalco and Ciudad Netzahualcoyotl were not actually squatted but sold, still they are considered as squatter settlements because the transaction was not legal (Cymet 1994, 12 and Hiernaux 1995, 7).

[11]*Ejido* Land: Communal land belonging to agricultural communities, a gain of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

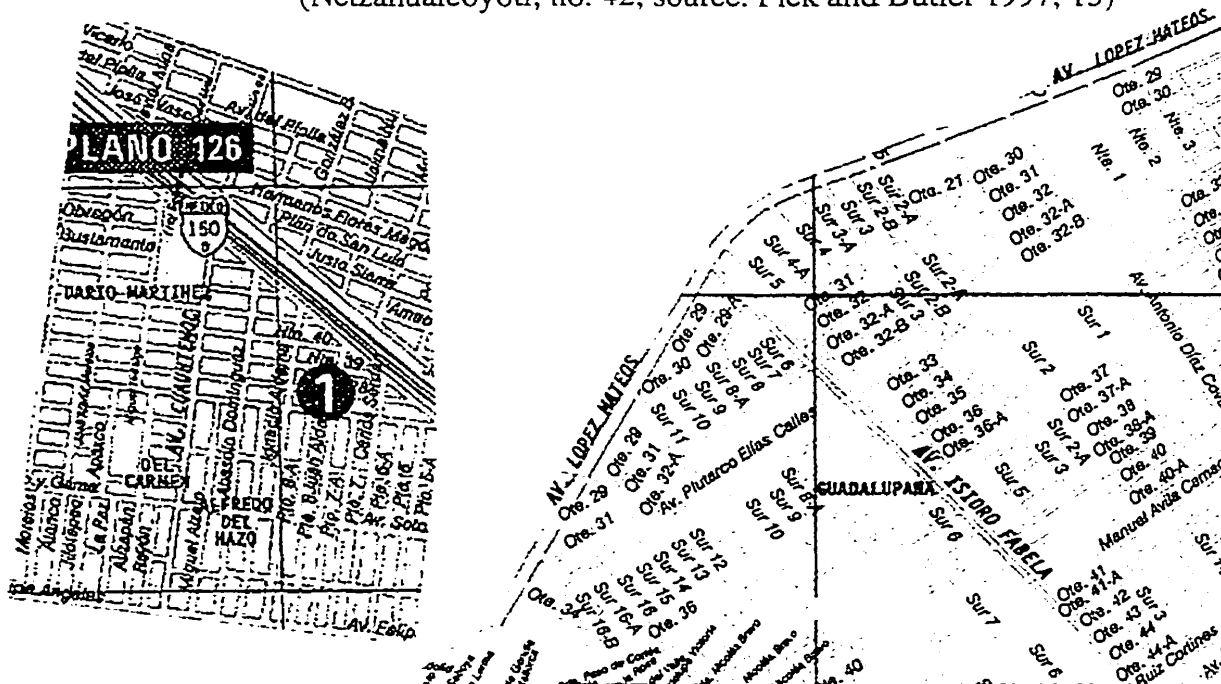
3.1 Oaxaca and Mexico City in North-America



3.2 Chalco in Mexico City
(source: Pick and Butler 1997, 15)



3.3 Valle de Chalco Solidaridad (no. 11)
(Netzahualcoyotl, no. 42; source: Pick and Butler 1997, 15)



3.4 Zone A: informants 1-7

3.5 Zone B: informants 8-13

Chalco is no less rich a source of data to study squatter settlements than other parts of the Third World, but the case of Mexico is probably more relevant now because of the controversial success of recent governments in integrating the marginal sectors of civil society into the global economy. Centralist governments[12] and urban-biased economic policies still keep forcing peasants to aggregate into cities as they did during the first forty years of Mexico's industrialization. Indeed, the biggest proportion of Mexican GNP is concentrated in cities like Mexico City. Yet, paradoxically, growth is also latent in both the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (MAMC) and in its share of social inequality.

The MAMC is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world, where approximately twenty million people now live. However, expected population growth is not as alarming, as some scholars and politicians have noted that migration rates in Mexico City, like in many primate cities of the Third World, have become negative since the 1980s (Richardson 1993; quoted in Lewellen 1995, 174). Nonetheless, the MAMC keeps stretching its limits and its population keeps growing. This contradiction can be explained when considering that those who have out-migrated from Mexico City (Federal District) to the outskirts of the city are originally rural migrants. The MAMC consists of the 16 delegations that make up the Federal District and 53 *municipios* in the State of Mexico. Migrants in Chalco mainly come from either (1) slums located in the area of the Federal District, which happens to be under the jurisdiction of what used to be considered the city; or (2) former squatter settlements already assimilated by the city, mainly municipalities of the State of Mexico such as Ciudad Netzahualcoyotl.

[12]For a discussion on the centralist character of the political economy of Mexico as related to its urbanization process see Cymet (1994).

Besides demographic conditions, Chalco itself is a valuable source of data for this study for two more reasons. First of all, because of factors such as its rapid growth and social change, and its high level of community participation and mobilization, this squatter settlement is an important focus of development issues involved in the urbanization process. Consequently, these issues cannot be excluded or overlooked in the analysis of migrants' cultural change. The second justification for the selection of Chalco for a case study is the observation of cultural contrasts within this community. Rural and urban systems are constantly mingled in Chalco, throughout the process by which migrants work towards becoming urbanites. Traditional people come to Chalco, via other parts of the city, mainly from the provinces of Puebla, Veracruz, Hidalgo, and Oaxaca, and their values start to be transformed.[13] The selected Oaxacan informants hold strong bonds to the land of their ancestors that conflict with the modernization forces of Mexico City. This polarity is so marked that although many migrants had already experienced modernity when they lived in the inner city, Chalco has become a repository of contrasting, though dynamic, cultural change.

Chalco shows impressive population growth rates. Its rapid urbanization is part of the reason why the world's most populated city expanded so disproportionately. The settlement, after the first colonizers came in 1978, grew from 250 000 to 480 000 inhabitants in the 1990-1995 period.[14] It practically doubled its population in this period with an annual growth rate, due mainly to immigration, of 14 percent (INEGI 1992, 16), in contrast to the 2.3 percent decline for the whole country in the 1980-90 period (Russell 1994, 265). The community is also young: its median age of 17 years is one of the lowest nationwide (INEGI 1992, 22), and its average number of children per family of 3.5 one of the highest (Hiernaux 1995, 8).

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[13]Tlaxcala, Guanajuato, Guerrero and Michoacán should be also added to the list of the provinces that account for the 70 percent of the total in-migration to the city (Cymet 1994, 18).

[14] The first figure is provided by Hiernaux (1995b, 7). The second was officially calculated by Municipalidad del Valle de Chalco Solidaridad in 1995 (quoted in Hiernaux 1995, 7). However, other sources present a figure for the actual population of about 1 million (Russell 1994, 288; Cornelius et al. 1994, 6).

Despite the population growth, the housing deficit has been reduced, especially since Solidaridad intervened. Now, as compared to the first years of Chalco's existence, there are fewer one-room housing units (21 percent) and more houses with two (33 percent) and three (45.3 percent) rooms (INEGI 1992, 97-8). Also, there has been a reduction in the number of inhabitants per housing unit and of inhabitants per room: by 1990, a census showed 5.2 and 2.0 users respectively.

According to a census of the State of Mexico, the province to which El Valle de Chalco belongs, in 1990, 64.2 percent of the rooms were roofed with concrete and 10.4 percent with iron-sheets, 84.2 percent of the houses had brick or stone walls and 68.3 percent used concrete for the floor. Regarding education, although 86.5 percent of the population between 5-14 years old goes to school (ibid., 55), the low rate of 35.7 percent enrollment into post-elementary instruction shows that education is not an important priority (ibid., 61).

It is impossible to find exact economic indicators in an informal settlement like Chalco, but we can rely on some census data to illustrate what people in Chalco do for a living. According to Hiernaux (1995), 34 percent of the population of working-age receive a salary. The rest (generally considered an "economically inactive population" consisting of under-employed people plus students, housewives, and pensioners) make a living either by running small and low-profitable shops in Chalco, or by finding self-employment in the innumerable informal activities of the inner city. For them, and even for those 59 percent officially earning less that two minimum wages (INEGI 1992, 94), integration into the urban economy, or sometimes even survival, is only possible through the informal sector.[15]

[15] It can be assumed that workers with a salary also engage in informal activities after-hours or on weekends.

Among the selected group of respondents, just five out of thirteen have formal employment (mainly service and manufacturing jobs) as the only source of the household's income. The other eight admitted to being involved in both formal and informal economic activities, and five of them disclosed that they only depend on the informal sector to support the household. There are some other sources of income as well. For example, Doña Lilia, one of the informants, does not depend only on the salary of her husband, an officially paid garbage-man, but also on the income of her children who, working illegally in the US, send her money.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Social scientists recognize that in order to achieve a better understanding of recently urbanized societies, there is a need for a more empirical and qualitative research "capable of replacing the over-emphasis on the scientific side of human relations" (Southall 1991, 3-4). When the first source of knowledge is traditionally-used statistical techniques (such as population rates and projections) social research tends to be dehumanized. Instead, numbers should merely complement findings from the emerging wave of qualitative research on urbanizing societies (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991, 6). Adopting this view, this study proposes that generalizations extracted from the field will inductively help to generate a "grounded theory" of the cultural adaptation process (ibid., 5-6). The main richness of qualitative methods, on which the thesis relies to develop its argument, is the possibility for the continuous generation of hypotheses, supplementary to the initial one. During the two months of fieldwork, the exploration of Chalco's cultural patterns not only supported but expanded the initial orientation of the research.

However, due to the required depth in data analysis, the research was limited to a reduced number of subjects. This study does not pretend that these randomly selected informants in Chalco represent the whole set of cultural patterns of the

community. The decision to rely on an exhaustive analysis of a few cases is just the preliminary step that "inducted theory suggests for the exposure of unknown phenomena" (ibid., 11). Admittedly, there is a price to pay for in-depth qualitative analysis, as scientific limitations can be imputed to any study based on a reduced number of informants. Visiting the site, several hours per day during 50 days, and carrying out thirteen interviews represents just an exploration of some cultural traits of Chalco.

3.3.2 Sources of data

The housing-society relationship that the research question addresses needs to be explained by two different but complementary sets of field-data. The first one consists of transcripts of informal interviews and notes from the researcher's participant observation in the community. The second is the graphic material (site sketches and photographs), collected as the 'unspoken evidence' for the existence and characteristics of the CAP. After each interview, the current layout of the house, as well as its chronological stages of growth were sketched. The drawings are complemented by a listing of non-architectural elements relevant to the study and by a set of black-and-white pictures. These pieces of evidence, although important, are less significant than the analysis of migrants' opinions.

Interviews

Thirteen 40-50 minute interviews were conducted during a sojourn in Chalco in September-October, 1995. The criteria for the selection of respondents was that they should be from the state of Oaxaca only, for two reasons. Firstly, the province is one of the oldest, which would mean that it presents the most cultural contrast with modern Mexico City. Secondly, such decision can be right to outline a standard pattern for comparison, the so-called 'traditional', although considering also that cultural traits among the ethnic groups in Oaxaca are not so dissimilar. It is true that there is a risk in categorizing culture within the tradition-modernity dichotomy model, for which modernization theory has been criticized. However,

sometimes at hand terms such as traditional and modern are conveniently used in this thesis to characterize cultural traits that do not conform to any identifiable pattern.

The taped conversations were guided by a four section questionnaire (see Appendix). The sessions started with a general informal discussion, with the intention to foster trust and confidence between the informants and the interviewer. Once respondents felt free to talk, the meeting switched to a discussion of their housing experience and of their urban experience after migration in general. In this section, physical icons of the CAP such as architectural elements and building materials were investigated. The last part of the interview, after scrutinizing households' incomes and budgeting, focused on migrants' opinions about their own and their neighbors' houses, and on the housing process. (The names of the informants, which are constantly cited in subsequent chapters, for discretion's sake are fictitious.)

The challenge of informal interviews (and of participant observation methods that will be described below) is to get the informants to express their reality in their own language, with their own concepts and references. In the analysis of findings, what informants say or why they say it is crucial; but even more important is the fact that they express the complexity of their social lives in their own conceptual frame.

Participant Observation

The second source of information consisted in getting closer to the community, participating in the life of the informants through occasional encounters, informal meetings, community events or simple street conversations. Anthropologists advise that the richest and most complete source of information on how people live comes from direct and personal participation (Foster and Kemper 1979, 82). Participant observation is a method that relies on witnessing the variety of

situations in which people meet, noting their problems and observing how they handle them, being party to their conversations and watching their way of life as it flows along (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991, 5). Through such involvement it is possible to meet informants and gain their trust. Even during moments when formality was needed, informants felt comfortable sharing their lives because I was, according to their perception, "not formally working."

Since anthropological researchers working with qualitative methods practically share their lives with the people in the setting under study, their personal approach and experiences are critical factors to the study. Fieldworkers are virtually part of the data-collection process rather than its external directors. Therefore professional ethics demands a constant revision of possible consequences, both positive and negative, of such involvement. It was necessary to take this into consideration prior and during the stay in Chalco.

3.3.3 Methodological considerations

Self presentation and introduction

Facing barriers of ethnicity, language, formal education and lifestyle constitutes one of the most important challenges to the anthropological researcher. When interacting with migrants from the state of Oaxaca, I was aware that such class barriers were present. I realized, therefore, the social hierarchy that my presence and attitude transmitted to the them would be a crucial factor both to my involvement in their lives and to the research. Anthropologists advise that the key to gain access to the people studied depends on a balanced and genuine down-playing of the researcher's role. A tactful diminishing of one's class advantages enables reception as a friend rather than an alien to the community. Being viewed as a stranger often represents a barrier for the fieldwork which goodwill alone cannot remove.

On the other hand, the validity of the findings could be jeopardized if, pretending to be closer to their live-style than I am, I oversimplified or fabricated the intentions of my stay in Chalco. Some reasons for the research have to be made clear, but not necessarily the project's technicalities. I had to avoid the danger of predisposing the informants to answer in ways which would be convenient for the study. The best procedure then, was to explain my role to each informant only once during my introductory speech. If I was asked any further questions about either the research or myself, I would answer as simply as possible.

Establishing a rapport with the community came to be my first task upon arriving in Chalco. I immediately sought contacts and made friends in the community. Access to the community of Chalco would not have been possible if I had not met the three people who introduced me to other interviewees. The mediators who helped me in my fieldwork were one local official and two migrants (Fig. 3.6). Thanks to the recommendation of these popular figures, I got in touch with informants willing to participate. By and large my approach to the community of Chalco followed the general recommendations given to fieldworkers. Informative discussion could only be promoted through "good rapport with good friends, in an environment of trust and confidence, resulting in abundant conversation over long periods of time" (Foster and Kemper 1979, 83).

3.6 One of the contacts

Considering cultural patterns

No culture can be understood if it is not first respected by the researcher. Fieldworkers should hold the belief that in order to "understand a people's thought one has to be able to think in their symbols" (Evans-Prithchard 1974, 79; quoted in Shaffir and Stebbins 1991, 83). Becoming sensitive requires leaving behind prejudices which can conflict with local culture. I recognized that the living patterns of local people are different from those found in mainstream urban society. Achieving that understanding does not require a predetermined sequence of steps. It requires, instead, an ongoing appreciation of how the local culture is defined and organized by "particular variations" (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991, 84). Instances of such cultural variations between the researcher and the subjects under study were constantly encountered in my everyday interaction with the people of Chalco. For example, the enthusiasm of female respondents showed me that women's active involvement in community life is increasingly becoming equivalent to men's. In other cases, the patriarchal structure of Mexico forced the interviews to be conducted only after 6:00 p.m., when there was at least one male member at home. It was also necessary to ask permission to take pictures. Excessive camera shots, to which some residents objected, could have represented a breach of trust.

Objectivity

The experience of living closely with people in Chalco, in their own environment, and participating in some of their community activities, was personally enriching. My observations led to a satisfying experience, an "identification with the people being studied" (Whiteford 1960, quoted in Foster and Kemper 1979, 73). Despite being an outsider, I found an impulse to identify with the people of Chalco and their problems. I also recognized, however, that this personal empathy had to be overcome by a strict and objective analysis. Scientific practice requires the researcher to be as detached as possible from the society under study. In Chalco, excessive involvement in local life might have thwarted the ability to conduct

objective research (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991, 85). More importantly, personal involvement could have affected the autonomy and self-determination of the members of the community whom I met.

In return for the valuable information that the people of Chalco shared with me, there are only two things that I could offer them: a disposition to listen to them and a hope that this research could be 'applied' so that it brings about positive changes for the community. Applied anthropology needs more space to develop realistic solutions to questions related to the urbanization process of the Third World. Such professional involvement should provide openings for the weaker sectors of society to increase their influence over the possible outcomes of development interventions (Lewis and Gardner n.d., 2).

Chapter Four The Cultural Adaptation Process

The following chapter, the first of two containing findings, attempts an exploration of the conflicting situation that migrants in Chalco go through in adapting to a cultural system extraneous to them. In it, people discuss in their own words what learning to live in between tradition and modernity feels like. We will see later, in Chapter Five, through an analysis of the housing process and through people's own descriptions of it, the way in which the CAP shapes the urban environment.

4.1 Rural Background

Cultural patterns in native Oaxaca, the province of origin of the selected informants, contrast considerably with those in modern Mexico City. In that province a deep-rooted cosmology characterizes not only the indigenous groups but also, though less markedly, the mestizo population. Zapotecos and Mixtecos of Oaxaca are just some of the native groups in the hemisphere who are still, after more than five hundred years of European contact, resisting Western assimilation. External interventions on their lands and cultures are mainly intended to support national development, by integrating indigenous populations and resources into the economic system. However, development encroachment upon such resources, far from benefiting indigenous groups themselves, has deteriorated their basic human rights. Health and formal education services, not to mention economic development programs, have often been dispensed without any consideration for aboriginal peoples' own culture, language, traditions and know-how.[1]

Still, most traditional systems (socio-economic, political-organizational, and cultural) are so ingrained, and commonly efficient, that they do not automatically surrender to the modernizing attempts targeted at them. Simply speaking, cultural traits of native people are the reflection of a livelihood that depends on agriculture, livestock raising and other

[1] It is not only through direct intervention that our world cultures are shrinking, but also through the influential reach of late 20th Century's mass media.

basic production systems for subsistence. For instance, an opinion of the first informant in Chalco, Doña Monica, alludes to an anthropological introspection of autochthonous thinking. A parcel of land for her is not only important because it provides dwelling but also because it provides subsistence. After 38 years of living in the city, she assigns less value to her private plot in the city than to her arable lands in Oaxaca. Realizing the productive capacity of the latter, Doña Monica revealed her attachment to her hometown, a place where "all [comestibles] grow, one sows pea . . . it grows, that is if there is land available." Moreover, aboriginal life is still so unexplored that it challenges the researcher's reasoning schemes. Only recently have outsiders started to realize that land, to take the same example, is linked to the very survival of people. It is not only so at the economic level, but also at the cultural level. Land is much more than simply a means of subsistence, it is the basis for social life, because indigenous land is directly linked to the system of belief and knowledge.

4.2 Reasons for Migration

As the main productive activity of indigenous populations diminishes in competitive value, it is increasingly difficult to rely on aboriginal land to make a living. In Mexico, the system has failed to provide the economic apparatus for the development of rural areas, and that is still the main reason why today villagers are being forced into massive migration. The political economy of Mexico, instead of stimulating growth in rural areas, has made economic concentration in metropolitan areas more attractive, especially in Mexico City.

Besides these 'push' factors, the city entices migrants towards its 'bright lights' and opportunities for better education. After analyzing findings from the research in Chalco, it is worth noting that eight out of thirteen informants admit that non-economic reasons were also motivating factors in the move to Mexico City. Personal incentives for migration are varied. Some migrants are forced to join their families in the city in order to keep traditional social ties, others are drawn by the city's charms: "one thinks to come and see how it is here, that is, one comes here to see what goes on". Others, still, come to

confront personal challenges "that in the village are limited." Doña Graciela assigns a more insightful explanation to the experience of migration: "a man who leaves [to go] somewhere else, is he who is going to live better." In sum, economic and social factors, as interpreted from Doña Monica's opinion, are both the driving forces of migration. According to her point of view, one comes to the city "to work and to see what it is like, because of curiosity and necessity, because of both things."

4.3 The CAP: tradition and modernity in conflict

It is important to understand the contrast between rural and urban systems, because sociocultural change of rural migrants, shaped by opposing forces, will constitute the scenario of the CAP. The encounter between tradition and modernity in the experience of migration can be approached in two different ways. One, in our top-down view, there is the notion that all cultures which are not 'integrated' into a modern order should 'adjust' to it. From the other perspective (coming from the opinions of villagers from Oaxaca), the one pulling force of change in the city that we take for granted, i.e., modernization, sometimes appears incongruent to migrants.

Once in the city, the traditional world-view of migrants, coming directly from the rural regions, clashes with the values of a complex urban society. For some individuals the shock is so intense, even though the mass media are spreading more than ever urban lifestyle to the hinterland, that it takes the form of an introverted retreat. After residing in Mexico City for a considerable time, Don Pedro lives semi-isolated from the city, clinging to familiar moral, educational and religious rural values. His social networks are only fortuitously formed at work, because he is "rather homeloving." In his spare time, he stays at home "arranging his plants, helping his children with their homework and so on." His voluntary segregation (and ceremonially quiet behavior) are consistent with the fact that what provoked him to migrate was not the search for social mobility, but the search for economic security. Don Pedro's predilection for the rural life goes so far that he admits, after 17 years of urban experience outside Oaxaca (including some seasonal residence in New York city): "the city is not any better than the home town. If I'd had

land, I wouldn't have left my village." It could be suggested, although this is by no means the rule, that the shock is more intense in people who did not have urban contact prior to coming to Chalco.

In Chalco, migrants experience a new life that contrasts dramatically with the uniformity of cultural systems in villages. The socio-economic situation is neither as promising as newcomers expected nor as homogeneous as they were used to in the highland. The two lifestyles (traditional life versus the modern/industrialized one) conflict in numerous ways. Generalization about sociocultural change is not possible because, the choice between modernization or retaining a traditional lifestyle ultimately depends on individual values. However, it is crucial to understand that fundamentally, external factors play a highly influential role in the conflict.

The following section attempts only to illustrate the standpoint from which the subjects of this anthropological study apprehend modern urban systems (e.g., jobs, credit, schooling, etc.). The description is intended to facilitate an understanding of the views of those for whom Mexico City represents a whole change of lifestyle. Some of the statements may seem unusual to the reader since findings are presented from the bottom-up perspective.

4.3.1 Incongruities of economic systems in cities.

The major influence of the migrant's CAP, as it is in most social processes of the global system, is the economic factor. It is so, perhaps, because it is on this issue where the dichotomy between traditional versus modern is the sharpest. Migrants in Chalco still perceive the economic system of the city as extraneous to them, in spite of the fact that they have been forced to integrate into it gradually. They are becoming acquainted with a labor market that is more institutionalized than in the countryside, or even than in the Mexico City of fifteen years ago when they arrived in Chalco. The modern way to make a living in the city is so incompatible with their world-view that some migrants prefer the rural system of direct transformation of the environment for the provision of goods.

The ambiguity between the two conflicting systems of production and trade, as perceived by the migrants, is expressed in the words of Don Danilo: "in the city, living is working in order to eat, while the village is more restful because there is self-sufficiency. Life is better, as long as you have a place in which to produce [food]." Naturally, the subject most referred to in the informal interviews, while discussing migrants' housing process, was building materials. Don Plutarco Uribe was disturbed by the fact that, in order to make a life in the city, "one has to buy everything, you have to buy lumber and everything. There [the countryside], however, you build your house with adobe; [if you need lumber] you go and cut it in the hills." Luis Davalos, too, concludes from his experience about rural and urban economic systems that in the city as opposed to the countryside, "one must buy everything, materials and all."

In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that in the Mexico city of 1995 the cash economy was still questioned by some informants in Chalco. Doña Monica, marginalized from the formal labor market, finds it incongruent that in the city "there is work, but there is no [money] to pay. There in the village, we don't buy the merchandise because it is all there. But here [in the city] money, [when] earned, it is spent much too." This argument is echoed by many who, like Doña Graciela, still believe that "in the village, even without money one eats well." The 'credit culture' is also ambiguous for migrants, and they accept it in accordance with personal preference. To give two extreme illustrations of this, Doña Monica, despite her poverty, does not count on loans to solve urgent financial problems. Conversely, 'modernized' Don Joél does not mind being in debt in return for acquiring a certain social status.

4.3.2 Diverse interpretations of economic crisis

A descriptive example of the overwhelmingly significant role of the economy in shaping society can be seen in the difference between the way in which various social groups interpret the effects of the economic crisis. In Mexico, the ancestral *crisis mexicana* has been so much a custom that even the term has been adopted into the slang of all social strata. The middle and upper classes familiarized themselves with the term, as observers

only, right after the expansionist period of Mexico, and before the breakdown of the import-substitution model. It was not until the 'lost decade', and more acutely in the most recent collapse of the 'Mexican miracle', that *la crisis* animated the awareness of all civil society. In the 90's, for the first time in contemporary Mexico, the middle class was particularly sensitive to downward social mobility.

From the bottom-up point of view, exemplified by poor migrants in Chalco, coping with *la crisis* was not a new experience for those used to living and dying in unstable or perilous conditions, even before migrating. An anonymous informant specified what the concept of crisis meant to him. "Crisis? Which crisis? We are used to living like this; crisis for you [a member of the middle-class], for you this is new. Here [in the city] you have people killing themselves on the metro rails because they can't pay their debts." It could be stated that crisis in the bourgeois understanding is only an ephemeral situation, a hardship to be overcome. In contrast, poor migrants rarely enjoy economic stability, the antithesis that would give sense to crisis. However, the fact that it is permanent does not negate the likelihood that the crisis is likely to worsen. The same poor people of today still remember with nostalgia those years before the 80s when living "was easier . . . nowadays [making a living] is much more difficult."

4.4 Deterioration of Living Patterns

Hampered by a permanent state of economic crisis and dependent on the demands of the world-wide economy, the political economy of Mexico has had a negative impact on the living patterns of migrants (see also Chapter Three). Traditional structures are disregarded when newcomers to Chalco are assimilated by (or marginalized from) development, through the urbanization process. The urbanization of the Third World, at least from the standpoint of the inhabitants of this barrio, brings about a constant deterioration in the most basic living patterns. The following is an exploration of some of the migrants' living patterns and the effects that the political economy has had on them.

4.4.1 Social Relations

The socialization patterns that migrants experienced as congruent in Oaxaca become incongruent when they encounter the complexity of existing networks in the urban society. For a villager, it is easier to live in the rural environment where "everybody knows you and greets you truthfully," and where there is leisure time to spend socializing with family and neighbors. In Chalco the situation is considerably different: most migrants agree that the fast pace that distinguishes urban life precludes warm relationships and promotes isolation. Don Plutarco Uribe justifies his detachment from the community because in a social environment "where you don't know anyone," people meet sporadically. Neither is Doña Monica content when she realizes that her ancestral custom of hosting family and friends is in jeopardy: neighbors "almost do not come here, neither do I go [to visit them] . . . because I have no time, *voy siempre a la carrera* (I am always in a hurry)."

The isolation suffered by an urbanite, or by a migrant in the process of becoming one, is structural in origin. It is a result of the individualism that is required in the city in order to attain progress, being the usual mean of social mobility in capitalist urban societies. Success in the socioeconomic system of Mexico City, highly determined by a neoliberalist political economy, is based on independent work and on the development of leadership qualities. It is important also to take into consideration that the constant aggregate of individual attempts to achieve prosperity, under the structural disadvantages of the Third World, makes social interaction even more competitive.

In order to succeed in such a context, migrants in Chalco have to adopt a novel set of social relationships that are foreign to them. For those who can manage to integrate into the new international division of labor, as well as for those working unlimited shifts in informal activities, the Western saying "time is money" is becoming increasingly applicable. Migrants tackle economic scarcity, and class achievement, by investing their own time as labor force, by reducing their time for leisure, and by refusing to plan long-term strategies for prosperity because they are impractical. Moreover, they have to start

relying less on each other than in the countryside, causing a decay of the well-known warmth of Mexicans. Don Alfonso laments that when he pays a visit to Don Pedro, his fellow countryman, his welcome is restricted to "drawing a chair . . . in the corridor." His wife, Doña Monica, excusing Don Pedro's behavior, comments: "I believe people are distrustful." Such suspicion becomes more understandable when one considers that illegal practices are included in the variety of options within the informal economy on which inhabitants in Chalco depend. Crime, usually operating hand-in-hand with marginality, is common in an insecure environment where the perception, at least as a protective mechanism, is that anyone is a potential lawbreaker.

4.4.2 Changes in moral behavior

Along with the CAP, the individuality and anonymity that best characterize urban life begins to affect the moral principles of indigenous societal orders. The modernization that migrants in Chalco undergo also represents a rapid transformation of their traditional moral values. At least for the selected informants, it is convenient and sometimes necessary to take for granted that any distinct behavior which is 'urban' is, therefore, 'normal'. This holds true in the case of Don Pedro, who indifferently accepts that "robberies start to happen nearby . . . and bad people start to appear," situations to which he is becoming accustomed. For his part, based upon his own system of ethics, Don Luis exalts villagers over urbanites, assigning to the latter a bad reputation, while not acknowledging, or perhaps not recognizing, that he too is becoming an urbanite. When describing the main rural-urban differences of lifestyle, he reflects: "How can you believe that a *ranchero* [villager] is going to break the law like if he was here in the city? You see, there are a lot [criminals] in the city." Examples of such prejudice are numerous among other informants. The rest of the responses regarding violence show as well a substantial apathy towards resisting the gradual corruption of their traditional values.

4.4.3 Undermining of education

Lack of attention to moral deterioration becomes more understandable when migrants begin to comprehend the extent of the paradoxes that exist in the supposedly educated

urban society. According to the informants of this study, the inappropriate behavior of urbanites does not agree with their higher levels of formal education, a belief popularly held. Don Juan shows his disappointment: "there are many places [educational institutions] so that they [urbanites] are more expert [well educated] and able to respect us. "But the urbanites," he added, "do not know how to respect [other people] . . . they are very low." On the other hand, migrants claim that, although in their hometowns formal education may not be sufficient, this problem is diminished because nuclear families are in charge of transmitting the necessary knowledge to cope with life. As an obvious result of this contradiction between education and good behavior, many migrants misinterpret and reject formal education in Chalco (or whatever of it is accessible to them) withdrawing into a system of traditional education imparted at home.

In addition, investment in education is considered to be impractical and a waste of time, because most public education in Mexico (one of the achievements of the cultural revolution in the 40s, see chapter Three), is unlikely to increase the job opportunities for migrants in the urban labor market. In addition, and this is even more deplorable, education is not considered as an option because it does not bring about immediate benefits, but only costs. A conspicuous illustration of such a pattern, constantly repeated in Chalco, is the struggle of Don Filemon's family for survival. The fourteen year old son who helped the household in the modest family business "finished elementary school, but since we cannot afford the second cycle, then now we will register my daughter [only]. Although education at that level is free, "sending two [children] to school is hard."

Fortunately, hope still remains, especially among elder generations. Some migrants still believe the best way to face scarcity is for young people to join educational institutions, which will eventually provide the tools to face an uncertain future. Indeed, informants recognize that education, although impractical in the short term, is a requirement for success and constitutes a legacy for their children. Don Javier still hopes: "what I actually wish for my children: that they be well prepared" (Fig. 4.1).

4.1 Chalco's new generation of change

4.4.4 Threats to religious freedom

Concern with the recent decline in the popularity of the Catholic church has prompted massive campaigns by the church to lure greater numbers of people into its fold. The Pope was clearly touched by the precarious conditions in the community of Chalco in his 1992 visit. What was never publicly clarified, however, is that the peace message of his sermon was also intended to silence deviant attitudes toward the Vatican. Moreover, a catholic church and a *Palácio Municipal* are prominent symbols in the main square of El Valle de Chalco Solidaridad. Such spatial arrangement of religious and government buildings expresses the centralization of institutional authority, in an effort to appease potential unrest. Such a strategy seemed called for in a community like Chalco, where an alarming deterioration of living conditions motivated migrants to search for alternative answers to their questions about what seems to be their hopeless destiny. It has been rumored that marginals in Chalco turn their hopes to marginal interpretations of Catholicism and to some 'unwanted' sects (Hiernaux 1995, 13). (During the conduct of the fieldwork, inspection of migrants' private lives corroborated the descriptions of other outsiders.)

A top-down imposition on religious practice, like that of the Catholic Church, may represent an obstacle for the CAP of rural migrants. A sudden change in the meaning that migrants assign to 'the Church', from the local collective to the global hierarchical structure, may undermine the very system of beliefs that they use as a support to cope with misery. However, the profound spirituality of the people from Chalco may denote positive expectations for change, as reflected in their altars for instance.[2]

4.4.5 De-politicization of the civil society

Individuals within civil society must be able to determine their collective interests independently of the state, providing in this way the basis of political democracy. As Oxhorn suggests, "the stability [and transformation] of democratic regimes is enhanced by strong civil societies whose components struggle for democracy" (Oxhorn forthcoming, 4). However, this does not seem to be the case in Mexico. The stability of the Mexican state has depended (especially after the PRI took power in 1929) on the application of certain formulas. The government has used typical forms of clientelism to provide both legitimacy and stability to the one-party political system. These political practices have subsequently undermined the capability of Mexicans to govern themselves. Migrants of Chalco are not the exception; in fact, the contrary seems to be more likely.

Solidaridad, as a policy instrument of the government, seems to have been effective in de-politicizing the community of Chalco (Hiernaux 1995). Reactionary actions of the program were meant to impress on people the belief that scarcity indeed could be beaten, but only through the lines of the current political-economic he situation in Chalco can be illustrated with the acute description that Ted C. Lewellen gives about Mexican politics: corrupt practices "are so routine that the people may be completely aware of them, but powerless or too disinterested to change the system" (Lewellen 1995, 151). What happens through the CAP politically, due to migrants' exclusion in decision making, is that their political culture is not added to the continuing search for a more participatory democracy.

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[2] The majority of informants reserve a special place in their homes for holy images. In addition, they constantly manifested religious devotion, especially when sharing their future aspirations.

Don Danilo, one of the subjects of the fieldwork, echoes this hypothesis with an opinion that comes from experience: "change also depends much on . . . let's not say on the government because the government is going to be always the government . . . they always keep us with lies and we know it." Don Danilo's daughter displays a different political culture. By supporting the ruling party without a critical view, she watches as her civil rights are being denied her by the paternalistic state. The only apparent alternative to her is to admit that: "you have to be inside the system." Such an attitude seems to be the consensus in the community of Chalco in general, but the ideology is apparently more widespread among those who have formal access to the economic system.

In spite of systematic efforts by the government to manipulate people's consent, political awareness struggles to stay alive in Chalco. Some indications were found to sustain the belief that people still consider political participation to be a vital component of community life. The first sign was demonstrated when one informant chose the ideal neighborhood he would like to live in on the basis of the community's capacity to organize. If Don Danilo were to choose a different environment, where he could improve his quality of life, he would do it on the basis of the local political organization. For now, he does not want to leave *colonia Guadalupana* in Chalco "since we were seven or eight households, we started to organize ourselves . . . therefore people in the *colonia Guadalupana* are more politicized than [people from] other barrios."

Another example of political awareness is found among migrants in Chalco who value local decision-making in the effort to redress the failures of Mexican authoritarian tradition. Don Javier relies more on plurality as an option for Chalco's organization: "I believe that the only option for this would be to have . . . I don't know, good *Jéfes de manzana* [community leaders] . . . for me the ideal would be that each neighborhood and each municipality would have its own representative."

4.5 The community of Chalco: A constituent of the world-society

Throughout this analysis, emphasis has been put on rural-urban discrepancies and on the faults of the Mexican political-economic system as the main constraints on the ability of migrants to cope in the city. However, the cultural change that rural migrants undergo in Chalco cannot be understood properly if two crucial facts are not taken into account: (1) globally, the community is a component of the worldwide class-society, bound to it by the world economy and (2) Chalco is connected to this global system mainly through the inter-cultural networks to all strata of Mexico City's society. It is with the combination of these two factors, global influence exercised by local means, that the factor of class becomes most relevant for the analysis of the CAP.

Social interaction with other sub-cultures of Mexico City steadily consolidates the status of migrants as marginals of urban life. Social exclusion has to do with the kind of political-economic role they play in relation to other sectors of the urban society. If there is inclusion to the urban culture, this is non-participatory because relationships are not reciprocal but hierarchical. Social status is organized from the ruling minority, whose interests and power are multinational (in Mexico, the 10 percent of the population who by 1990 controlled 41 percent of the GNP) to the bulk of marginals who constitute the unskilled labor force. It is in this manner, convenient for the continuation of the political-economic system, that the social habits of Mexico City are mainly defined.

Taste, for instance, is not a matter of personal choice, as Doña Consuelo intuitively believed it was when building her house ("everyone builds according to his/her own taste"). On the contrary, popular taste in housing, as reproduced in Chalco, is introduced by the commercial interest of national and/or international elites. Other social patterns as well, such as those associated with dress, speech, and behavior, also considered to be urbane, are not created in Chalco. They are instead adopted from upper classes of the world society, including the national elite, with a local interpretation. With the intention of corroborating this argument, this study identified three conduits through which migrants in this community suffered the influence of other urban sub-cultures.

The first means through which migrants adopt most urban habits is by learning from the accumulated experience of those who previously inhabited the inner areas of Mexico City or cities elsewhere. The first migrational experience of Doña Monica, prior to Chalco, took place in a middle-class neighborhood. After having lived there for 15 years, she grasped some mechanisms for social mobility (although this was less achievable in such an environment). In a contrasting case, Don Pedro worked seasonally, for four-month periods, in New York City, in order to earn some cash. That income was to be used during the rest of the year for family necessities, including housing, in Mexico City. By doing so, he directly took from New York City's lifestyle diverse social icons and skills that would eventually reproduce themselves in the markedly different context of Chalco.

The second means of cultural influence is the every-day interaction of marginals with all urban sub-cultures upon which they depend. According to official rates, only twenty percent of the population of working age subsist from economic activity inside Chalco. The rest, by making a living in the city through the most diverse activities, enter in direct contact with the urban society at large (Hiernaux 1995, 8). Don Plácido sells his vegetables in a different neighborhood each day of the week; Doña Monica works ten-hour shifts, takes her children to school and receives medical attention in the same middle-class neighborhood where she first lived; Don Danilo's eldest daughter even resides week-days in an industrial zone of the city and goes back to her parents on weekends. When these people share their wages and experiences with their families, they are revealed as true conveyors of cultural change. Don Javier, through his job as a carpet cleaner, has been in touch with the richest elite in Mexico city; as he said: "by and large all my work is over Lomas de Chapultepec, La Herradura, Lomas del Bosque, Polanco, La Narvarte, San Angel...." He assumes his adaptation to the city is connected to the adoption or recognition of traits or icons of the most affluent sector of society. He has learned how to build his house (a social pattern, as will be described in Chapter Five) "as one sees many houses where one goes much downtown, and over there . . . then one sees all that and wants to modernize oneself."

Finally the most immediate means through which migrants are culturally influenced, in this case manipulated according to the interests of larger economic powers, is the mass media. Television broadcasting is particularly remarkable because through it, virtually everyone in Chalco has access to the images of urban culture. There is no need to go downtown to experience TV programs' rendition of the cultural life of Mexico City. One has the less painful option to stay at home and digest the alternative reality on screen. In Chalco as in Mexican society as a whole, television is so much a part of people's lives that most of the speaking at a regular family gathering comes from a TV set (Fig. 4.2). It is worthwhile, therefore, to include the most popular TV program during the fieldwork as an important factor in the analysis of Chalco's society.

4.2 TV set: another member of the family

El Premio Mayor, the most popular soap opera of 1995, was broadcast on weekdays on Channel 2 at 9:00 p.m. (about the time when many interviews were conducted). The story was about the members of a low-income household (the Pérez family) who, by winning the lottery's *premio mayor* (first prize), see their dreams come true. Before this fortunate occurrence, the cultural traits of the Pérez family resembled those of a typical marginal family. When their fortunes change, their expectations of material improvement are gradually fulfilled until they integrate themselves completely into the established middle-

class. For more than two hundred episodes, the members of the Pérez family encourage marginals to keep hoping for the same good fortune. *El Premio Mayor* seems to have been successful in its general appeal, as has been demonstrated through its popularity among all social classes throughout Mexico. In Chalco, Doña Monica seems to be so strongly influenced by the program that, when questioned about her expectations, she immediately answered: "some day I'll get the lottery, I'll become rich."

Women and children seem to be the two sectors of the population most vulnerable to the consumerist pressure on mass media. The Fernandez family, as the Mexican tradition prescribes, can still afford the presence of Doña Consuelo raising her children at home, while listening radio. She is in charge of the decision-making of her family regarding consumption habits, and she proudly mentions that "the idea of how this [her house] was to be made was almost mine . . . he [her husband] doesn't have [good] taste."

In order to maintain the kind of illusions promoted by *El Premio Mayor*, the political and economic powers constantly create new methods to re-invent themselves. Recently, mass media in Mexico has intensified the promotion of ideas associated with the contemporary mythos of individual success, namely upward mobility. Continuous pressure by multinational companies to maintain and expand markets is reflected in the tendency of society to place an increasingly high value on material accumulation. For instance, 'improvement' of housing conditions is analogous for most people to 'the quantity' of built area, as measured in square meters. It was noticed that migrants, beyond their consumption of basic goods, often consume products that are considered to be the latest in vogue, including a list of housing supplies like TVs, VCRs, electronic supplies or any other gadget (another sign of the relative nature of poverty in Chalco). However, the consumer habits of some migrants seem to be more rooted in indigenous values. In contrast to other informants, Don Danilo perhaps has not accumulated area because it would imply a change of his principles as a consumer. He refers to other people in his community (living in houses with considerably more space than his humble dwelling) as

migrants who "have excelled . . . they are people who certainly save it [money]; however, they go without food in order to save."

It is evident that the cultural imposition of the mass media in Mexico works as an efficient apparatus for the facilitation of global capitalism. Influenced by this strong social factor, migrants in Chalco are likely to leave behind their indigenous cultural traits in the process of becoming urbanites. Don Liborio realizes that for a migrant there are not many options. Ultimately urban culture is the only one left: "I think once one arrives to Mexico [City], we copy it [their lifestyle] from those who are here," already established urbanites. One doesn't follow village traditions but the ones from the people who live here, because one changes one's ideas." Such ideological changes fit the model that Mexico City's society follows in modernizing. For instance, the model from which Don Danilo deciphers how an 'appropriate' urban house should be, is consistent with that in already modernized societies in the West, from which Mexican mainstream culture is influenced. He supports this idea by stating that in Chalco "there are few residents whose houses already have a 'regular facade' . . . like if they had been in *el norte*."

4.6 Social Strategies for Adaptation

Up to this point, this analysis has dealt with the global and local agents that define the CAP of migrants. It will now examine the way in which migrants react to their constrained socio-economic role in Mexico City. This situation motivates migrants in Chalco to develop certain mechanisms for adapting to the urban environment. According to their own means and skills, migrants in Chalco conveniently manipulate symbols of the established iconography in order to express a higher social standing. In this barrio where money is scarce, income is indeed important, but it is by no means the only determining factor in achieving social mobility. In Chalco as in Mexico City, this last depends as well on the one hand on social attitudes towards self-presentation, ethnicity, language, education and work of migrants. On the other hand, it also depends on the best use of financial resources to acquire and expose artifacts involved in everyday life. The

following is a description of both sets, behavioral and material, except for housing which will be treated in detail in Chapter Five.

4.6.1 Ethnicity and Language

According to the social rules of an urbanized society, the less apparent the external signs demonstrating rural origins, the better adapted a migrant appears to be to the urban environment. Of those signs, or symbols, the least changeable, for obvious reasons, is race. The ethnic hierarchy of Mexico's population ranges from pure European descent (about ten percent of the total) to full-blooded Indians (a race that in the world-system of strata occupies one of the lowest levels). In between the extremes stands the 70-80 percent of *mestizos* (people resulting from the mixing of both races) on which the contrasting society of Mexico is based. People in Chalco show such pronounced evidence of indigenous features that they cannot be categorized as *mestizo*, as this is the main composition of urban society. In the community, as much as in international diplomacy, ethnicity is still a 'politically incorrect' topic. Yet, the issue is not irrelevant at all in social relations. Possession of an indigenous background for the people of Chalco, as the world currently operates, implies an inherent misfortune that constrains them in coping with the urban culture. Indians in the city no longer feel the sense of pride expressed, for example, by the Oaxacan Benito Juárez who, in 1858, became president of Mexico, exalting his indigenous values.

If migrants are unable to mask their Indian features, they certainly will try to mask the accent which discloses either a rural origin or a language different from Spanish. In social interaction, migrants control their accents and show care in the correct use of Spanish. Doña Monica, unlike the majority of the respondents, speaks Spanish only as a second language. Her mother tongue is *Zapoteco* (which is also the name of the ethnic group she belongs to) and she only started learning Spanish at the age of 17, when she arrived in the city. After 38 years of speaking the official language of Mexico, she does not feel completely comfortable because, as she confessed with embarrassment, "even now I have an accent."

4.6.2 Self-presentation

The level of adaptation achieved by migrants in Mexico City depends on how they play the social game of presenting oneself. The persistence of their classification as urbanites shows the importance of labels in the definition of hierarchies. In the most basic division of classes, differentiation between villager and urbanite is as significant as that between poor and rich. It is common that an informant, managing an intuitive sense of hierarchies as an adaptive response, more readily defines himself as an urbanite than as a villager or a migrant. Classifying oneself as a migrant, no matter how long one had been in the city, would indicate a lack of success in adaptation to the urban culture. Intending to be, or rather pretending to be, less rural and more urban, migrants try to be as discreet about their rural backgrounds as they can. In some instances, informants refer with emphasis to villagers as "them," as if their own CAP was already completed. Although Filemón Rodríguez cannot put aside the strong presence of social and ethnic networks that identify him with the migrant group, he defines himself as an urbanite. As a matter of fact, the new name given to the community when instituted as a municipality provides migrants with the identity of inhabitants of an urban neighborhood. Once Don Pedro, a migrant who would never deny his background, inadvertently expressed: "I am already from El Valle de Chalco."

Traditional fiestas present opportunities for migrants to display the social skills they need in order to be considered 'veritable urbanites'. Commemorating milestones in their lives, migrants show the achieved level of urbanity in social situations. Fiestas offer all participants, and particularly the host, an opportunity to show off economic prosperity, according to the canon of the elite. Particularly important is the 15-year-old birthday fiesta, where the *quinceañera* "is presented to society in the moment when she becomes a woman," as Don Alfonso stated at his daughter's party. In another case, the marriage of Raúl represented for the Rodríguez family a social commitment to invest a considerable sum of money in abundant food, drink and house decoration . The wedding was a priority

in the household budgeting to the point that, after the considerable investment, there was no money to afford basic housing needs (such as a railing for the balcony).

4.6.3 Education and Employment

Social classes in Mexico are, to a great extent, arranged according to the fundamentals of the capitalist system of production: the division of labor and the specialization of society. Most of the work force in Chalco is employed in unskilled jobs, in both the formal and informal sectors, while only less than one percent of people hold a professional degree. The majority do not have the privilege of having an education that would give them the opportunity to achieve status in the hierarchy of labor specialization in society. Still, migrants proudly boast of connections with acquaintances who might hold prestigious positions in society. Don Joél prided himself on "excellent friends who are lawyers, engineers . . . [they are] friends that I have met through work."

At the other extreme of the social hierarchy, perhaps even below informal activities, are those jobs considered the least socially rewarding. Among the informants in Chalco, 'businessmen' of the informal economy are better recognized than the three garbage collectors, two housemaids and two masons who were interviewed. According to prejudicial Western standards, these people might be referred to as 'losers'. It is not advisable for individuals to present such low credentials, nor was the issue discussed during the interviews. For example, in response to questions about his job, Luis Gómez was ashamed to admit that he is a garbage man, but answered the question by describing his job responsibilities. In another example, Doña Monica responded ambiguously that she does "*trabajo en casa*" (housework), rather than specifying what she did for a living. She avoided such pejorative terms as *criada* (raised), *sirvienta* (servant) or domestic worker, that her employers use to refer to her.

The disparity between classes in the social hierarchy of labor is such that status is ascribed not only by resistance to becoming a 'loser' but also by ambition to becoming an employer of a member of the lower classes. Don Joél once served other people in order

to survive in Mexico City, but now, on his way up the social ladder, he believes that "times have changed so much that, maybe, we are to be served."

4.6.4 Artifacts

Considering that purchasing power remains limited in Chalco, the best use of financial resources will determine who deserves recognition as an urbanite. Capital is a relevant factor in the migrant's social mobility, since success in adaptation to the urban modus operandi is necessarily equivalent to being a consumer. Social pressure invariably forces everyone (although those who have less are more vulnerable to the phenomenon) to aspire to the acquisition of consumer goods, particularly those produced by means of advanced technology. In the city "one has the comfort of having a good television, a good audio system and so on," Don Joél said while describing what being an urbanite signifies; and he added: "I mean, those are the things that can be owned, maybe not every one can have them," thus realizing that hierarchies are intrinsic to the accumulation process of industrial Capitalist societies.[3]

People talk about 'the best use of money' so naturally that the contradiction within this statement is overlooked: how can money, as quantifiable as it is, be relative to what can be purchased with it? How can the price of a watch vary so overwhelmingly, even after considering material and technological variables? The key is the social value added to the production cost of an object. Migrants are aware of this added value of commodities, when they realize that the few objects they can afford, beyond their obvious purpose, can also be used to tackle the CAP. Within individual value-systems, migrants know which objects are more important than others to have in their lives. Priorities range between basic goods for subsistence and luxury items thought of as necessary for 'social success', as the culture-ideology of consumerism promotes. Such objects are seen as capable of solving the immediate obstacles of cultural adaptation. Therefore a classification, outlined from informants' priorities, seems helpful.

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[3] As opposed to the production for subsistence that best characterize agricultural societies, such as Oaxacan migrants.

Special importance is given to such artifacts that migrants wear on themselves at work or during any leisure activity in the city. Icons denoting modernity are preferable to the rural ones because the latter would reveal the background of migrants. Don Joél still loves wearing *huaraches* (sandals) but he would only use them at home and after hours, even during a hot day. He admits that "walking around over there with my *huaraches* and my hat . . . I feel I look bad." Even more evidently, modern cars and clothes (or personal-use objects such as jewelry or cellular phones) help them express the level of adaptation that they, as consumers, have been able to achieve. Unfortunately for their adaptation, such superfluous artifacts are increasingly expensive for the majority of migrants, but the dream is still strong. Liborio Dominguez's wife, when questioned about her life expectations in general, included a car in the list of priorities. The restless hope that characterizes Mexicans even in times of misfortune inspired her to share her dreams. She expects her situation to improve "not now, but when my children grow . . . [now] we are *amolados* [poor], [but] hopefully my children could study and make a better future that includes a car or something."

Next, in descending order in the list of priorities, are objects which are part of the semi-private or private lives of migrants; these are household goods and appliances. They are second in this classification, not because they do not accomplish their function of helping their owners adapt to urban life, but because they are shown to very few people in the city (the few that the migrants feel able to trust), some of whom may be other migrants. The objects of every-day use, particularly, are charged with expressing that one's attempt to become urban has been more successful as compared to other migrants' attempts. This results in competition between migrants. Don Javier's intention to display such social attributes is best illustrated by a custom he shares with his countrymen every Sunday. After the soccer game he plays with his fellows, Don Javier shares food, beer and music (or a TV show) in his patio. He dares to do so because he feels comfortable with his "good television or good refrigerator, a stereo system, or an oven . . . see, three, [or] four blending machines," as he commented repeatedly during the interview. Also, when questioned about his aspirations for the future, he proudly mentioned that, if he had

money, "I'd have my Jacuzzi," although that private whim would be one of the last priorities.

But apparently, there is no object in migrants' lives as private as the religious altars that they place strategically in their houses (seven out of thirteen of the visited households have an altar). Paradoxically, it seems easy to relate the mysticism with which altars are arranged to the resistance some migrants unconsciously express to the kind of imposing modernization they undergo in Mexico City. The attachment that migrants feel to their holy images is nothing but proof that they still have faith in their traditional beliefs and world-view for changing their unfortunate situation. (Fig. 4.3).

4.3 Altars: a silent sign of hope.

Chapter Five Housing: Physical Outcome of Cultural Adaptation

5.1 Self-Help Housing in Chalco

Impermanent goods, analyzed in the previous chapter, are not as representative of migrants' adaptation to the urban culture as is their most permanent possession, their house. This chapter analyzes the migrant housing process as well as its physical outcomes (forms, materials, elements, etc.) in an attempt to find a connection between its development and the cultural adaptation process (CAP). It is noteworthy that the intention is not to scrutinize all elements of migrant housing, but to generate hypotheses for further research. This analysis is merely an exploration of the complexity of adaptation as one of the many cultural processes that shape the urban environment throughout the very experience of living.

5.1.1 Self-help housing: an indicator of urban success

For city observers, the characteristics of a migrant's house represent the extent to which its owner has been successful in achieving urban status. From the standpoint of users, migrants have individual ideas of the role played by self-help housing in their overall 'progress' in the city, or whatever interpretation their world-view assigns to their future. Doña Monica, when requested to elaborate on this issue, included her house in the list of required priorities for advancement: "I'd like my children to live better [than now] . . . to have a better house, to eat [better], to dress" better. Doña Lilia has been more fortunate, since she has already attained a level of comfort in the city and has begun to accumulate large amounts of property. "We have this house, I have another one, another one, so I think in that regard I have succeeded." In contrast to the majority of informants, Don Danilo does not view his house as a direct reflection of personal values. He does not seem worried about the appearance of his house when he invites friends in, as long as his hospitality is genuine. "I am aware of what I am," he remarked.

The strong patriarchal tradition of Mexico dictates that providing appropriate housing for the family is entirely the responsibility of the man. If he fails, he is perceived to be

unsuccessful as both an urbanite and as a 'man' (in the sense of gender roles). Therefore, according to this logic, a house either dignifies or discredits a man. Doña Monica strongly criticizes her husband because he has not been able to build a house she can consider appropriate, after 27 years in the city and 5 in Chalco. While describing Don Pedro's house, her favorite in the area, she inadvertently switches to a description of the owner himself: "that [Don Pedro's house] seems very nice, because he really is a man, he wants to progress, but [pointing out her husband] he doesn't." Thus, she compared Don Pedro's success in becoming an urbanite with that of her husband through a possession intrinsic and common to them both, their houses.

On a community scale, success or failure is evaluated through comparison with the experience of every other migrant in Chalco. Don Joél relates his housing experience, inevitably, in relation to those of the other neighbors: unlike him, "the man of the other side . . . when I bought the plot he already lived here and had two rooms made of wire, and he is still there," with the same housing conditions. Similarly, Don Joél is aware that his house in Chalco needs considerable improvement because, beyond personal judgment, he recognizes: "there must be some houses better than mine." Most informants hold a positive appreciation of Don Joél's house, because it does not reproduce the building patterns of houses that seem to be the 'most rural' in the community. This last is the case of the house described by Don Joél: "I have a neighbor over here who . . . I don't know when he will be able to build an (exterior) wall . . . years are going to pass and he is not going to build it because he doesn't have the opportunity."

5.1.2 The relevance of self-help housing in migrants' lives

Findings in Chalco suggest that beyond the perception of squatting as the only means of providing oneself with basic shelter, there is also a philosophical dimension that migrants attach to the phenomenon. Consistent with the rural world-view, they do not visualize their living space as a finished good to be acquired at one time, but rather as the product of a continual process, an inherent component of their living experience. In Chalco it is still very important for migrants to build their own dwelling by themselves, just as they

did in Oaxaca. For instance, Don Luis would never buy a house which did not satisfy his personal aspirations, even if it was built with an adequate design and construction quality. Rather, he is building his dwelling at the speed determined by his limited resources, but it will be built to his exact specifications. Such traditional ideas about housing have been transmitted to him through generations, as he relates: "My old man, who had more experience, said to me: 'It is about taste because . . . we are never equal.' Why are you going to buy a house, if you say: 'I don't like this house'? I'd rather buy a plot and build according to my own taste." Thus, it can be said that migrants build their houses not only because to buy one ready-made would be too expensive, but because the act of building it helps them to achieve a vital aspiration.

Migrants preserve their ideas of self-help housing by resorting to their preferred alternative: building on their own. In Chalco, they rediscover the innovative traditional building skills that they had learned from their ancestors, only this time they do it individually, as the social network of Mexico City demands. This attempt to provide themselves with housing, although long and painful, is preferable to the housing alternatives the city offers, because these continue to be either unaffordable or inappropriate for their cultural needs. Instead, self-help housing takes place along with the very experience of living in a heterogeneous society, by evaluating and comparing houses seen in and outside Chalco.

If marketing strategies have not been effective enough for migrants to consider buying a property, renting seems to be an even less attractive housing option. The sense of belonging that is provided by a dwelling that migrants built themselves, brick by brick, can hardly be replaced by an option that according to their perception, would involve "squandering money." If Don Joél rented the house where his family lives, he would not be as socially successful as he considers himself to be. Nor would he be able to attain a high level of personal satisfaction, and his dwelling would not be the most direct source of self-esteem, judging by the way he expresses himself, while seated comfortably in his patio: "observing how all this has evolved, I personally feel, I say it with great pride and I

tell my wife, I feel quite satisfied with what I have been able to do. Because it is not easy [to find] someone coming and doing what I have done, sincerely. Because I know people who come years and years and keep leasing and living the same way, without going any further."

However, it is not the monetary value of the house that is of primary importance to most migrants, but the emotional bonds they feel towards their home. Doña Monica, speaking very directly, related how proud she feels about her house, although the pride was not expressed in a way necessarily consistent with the conventional notion of ownership, as she clarified: "I never say 'it is mine', I always say where 'I live in'."

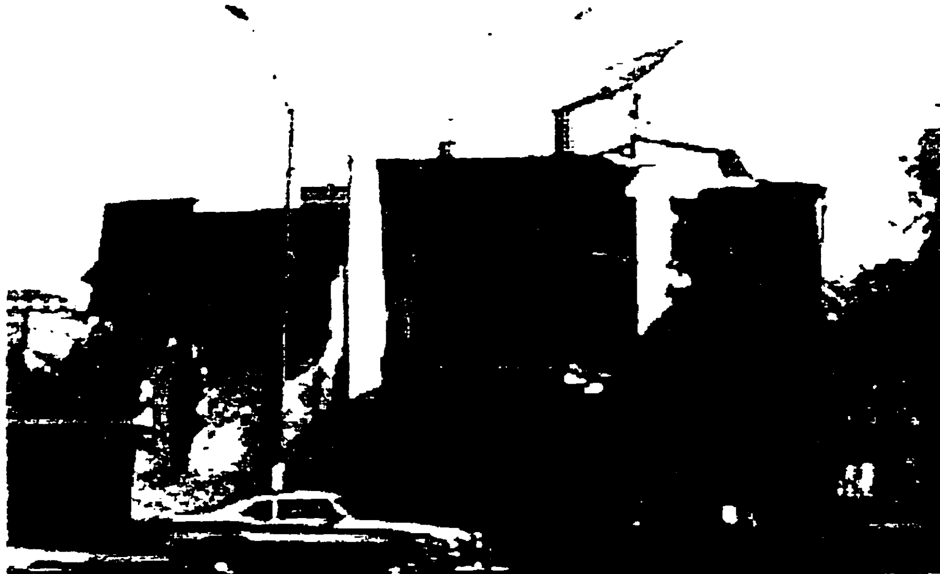
5.1.3 The origin of a 'personal taste' for building

As it is with the material culture of a society, the idea of a house as 'good' or 'bad', depends upon fashion or social perception. We are so embedded in the class society, that we take for granted that the aesthetic value or 'good taste' of a house has already been socially defined. Housing in the class-conscious society of Mexico, as in other Spanish-speaking societies, is divided primarily in *vivienda residencial*, residential housing, and *vivienda popular,* popular housing (Figs. 5.1, 5.2). Thus, a *zona residencial,* residential zone, is that which has reached a certain status and is inhabited generally by urbanites who enjoy complete financial stability.

Thus, ironically, 'personal taste' cannot be figured out entirely by oneself; it is rather a product of a particular social dynamic. Taste is determined by the dominant classes who, in Mexico City, inhabit *zonas residenciales*. They are the agents that produce the social images, exercise the commercial pressure, and motivate the lower classes to reproduce their taste. Don Javier admits his 'personal taste' is influenced by the well-to-do neighborhoods where he worked because "there is where one sees [the] houses" that are reproduced in Chalco. More pessimistically, Liborio Dominguez explains how migrants have nothing to do with the creation of urban taste: "We [migrants] copy it from those

who are [already] here. That's what I think. One doesn't follow village traditions but those of the people who live here."

Apart from this strong influence, migrants are ultimately the ones who play a major role in decision-making during the house building process, because construction is an individual process. Although social pressure may be most influential, innumerable factors at the household level will finally determine what changes are made in the house.



5.1 A *vivienda residencial* in Mexico City

5.2 A *vivienda popular* in Mexico City

5.1.4 Social problems inherent in the process

Unfortunately, not every endeavor to proceed through the CAP is equally successful. According to the basic laws of competition inherent in any class society, while some people are able to accumulate material possessions others are unable to do so. Even Chalco (supposedly inhabited by a population considered poor in absolute terms) evidently suffers from a social differentiation that results in social problems. When some people cannot count on the same resources, or cannot manipulate them adequately, to be an integral part of society, problems arise. After a second story was added to his house, Don Javier perceived his family to be a victim of "much envy against us . . . we realized it because upon making a room, or a slab, gossips came [started to happen]; they [their neighbors] came to insult us." The members of this family confessed to living in a tense atmosphere where they have even suffered physical attack. Doña Rodríguez attributed such rejection to the fact that her neighbors "believe we have much money." The Rodríguez family income is slightly higher, although less regular, than that of their neighbors. This extra income allows them to build additions to their house instead of being discouraged by such problems. Their wealth is expressed in various ways, one of which is the external appearance of their well-built facade, more consolidated than that of their neighbors' houses.

5.1.5 Restrictions

Similar to the necessity for migrants to adapt to an urban social environment, their housing in Chalco is limited by the restrictions of urban infrastructure. Migrants are not used to being confined to urban-type plots, because an abundance of land in Oaxaca allowed the building of detached-room houses. Don Danilo said that in Oaxacan villages, households have at their disposal a minimum of 500 sq.m. to build their dwellings.[1] In contrast, Chalco was illegally subdivided by clandestine promoters generally in 200 sq. m (20x10) plots, and therefore migrants have had to adjust to such confinement (Hiernaux 1995, 8; Cymet 1994). Newcomers to Chalco are shocked to discover that "here [in the city] one is limited to the plot, while there [in the countryside] it [the house] can be

[1]Other informants provided different data. Liborio Dominguez describes land division in Tonalá, his village of origin, as "*solares* of one thousand sq. m."

enlarged as much as you want." Similarly, Don Danilo's housing perception was affected when he realized building "here [in the city] is very different because it [the plot] is a small portion of land." Informants do not lose any chance to complain about such restricted plots. The Dominguez family claimed that they felt more comfortable "there [in Oaxaca where] there are large land plots." They believe plots "are more reasonable [in size]. Whereas here [in Chalco] these do not have land," meaning large surfaces.

Other limitations include the unfamiliarity with new building materials and techniques (see Section 5.3) and Mexico City's vulnerability to earthquakes. Besides dealing with more complex methods of construction, migrants have to consider that they are building on soil possessing one of the lowest surface bearing values (3 000 kg/ sq.m, 0.307 ton/sq.f), where Chalco lake existed not long ago. Skilled enough to overcome such a disadvantage, Filemón Robles realizes that a "good house" has to be also "a well-built house." For him, "building it well [would mean] the columns would be thicker, so that the earthquakes would not tear it down . . . because now everything is built with thin rods and thin columns." Migrants have learned through experiencing the devastation of earthquakes that the quality of the structure must be added to the list of housing priorities.

5.2 Building Patterns

5.2.1 The CAP implies making building mistakes

The need to establish a home in Chalco is more urgent than the more lengthy process of learning to build in an urban manner. Migrants acquire building skills through the actual practice of self-help housing but they also learn that the empirical process inherently involves functional mistakes. Informants admit, after having inhabited such spaces for some time, that their experience in urban-type building is inadequate. Don Pedro stated that when he first settled into the community in 1980, he could not possibly have had the whole picture of how his house would evolve. He recognizes that by adding components, his family "failed a little" in the decision-making on their housing evolution, because they "didn't know how to design it well." Now, some time later, Don Pedro is aware that a layout consisting of dispersed rooms, separate from the principal functions of the home, is

not the most convenient. Although rightfully blaming this on time limitations, Don Pedro regrets other building failures in his house: two bedrooms lack windows because a closet blocks their potential location. Similarly, it was only after Doña Lilia spent a considerable amount of money to have a concrete staircase poured in an erroneous location, that she recognizes the fact that "a staircase always must be inside, in the middle [of the house]." After suffering the inconveniences produced by a vertical connection outdoors, she now admits: "[her husband] doesn't want it [the staircase] there. He is going to change it, I don't know how but he is going to move it . . . to tear it down." Liborio Dominguez confesses having unnecessary circulation area too. When he was asked about the favorite rooms of his house, he pointed out the two in the front of its elongated layout, because "they are closer to the edge" of the street, and have direct access to services.

5.2.2 The CAP defines forms

A visitor's initial impression of housing in Chalco would be of an endless repetition of concrete boxes. But as one walks along the streets of the settlement, there is evidence of the residents' vivid desire to build in multiple forms. The aims of the people can be seen in architectural forms that are consistent with the cultural definition of those who produce them. Housing morphology is, to some extent, the result of the social context of the place where it is generated, particularly when it is created by the people living there. Thus, reciprocally, if such forms are studied, they could reveal clues about the CAP of migrants. There is one example in particular that expresses the two cultural contexts involved in the CAP. Building pitched roofs has been considered a vernacular practice, although, at least in Mexico, its social function may be interpreted differently, according to whether the setting is rural or urban.

If we were to dissociate urban and rural housing, regional determinism would dictate that pitched roofs are necessarily made of rural materials, and horizontal ones with concrete. So it is perceived by the people of Chalco: both roofing options, restricted by regionalist notions about building materials, are culturally distinctive to them. Migrants admit to favoring the continuation of the custom of building with pitched roofs, as they were

taught in Oaxaca. Don Pedro attributes his preference for pitched roofs to the influences of *"los señores de antes"* (his ancestors) in the countryside, assuming that roofs are made of wood and *teja* (roof tiles) "because that is what the custom is like." Conversely, throughout their CAP, migrants come to realize that concrete flat-roofing is inherent to the modern city. They learn that a horizontal roof is possible because, thanks to modern technology, rain water is conducted through pipes, theoretically solving leakage problems more efficiently than rural roofing. After 38 years of life in Mexico City, Doña Monica is convinced that "here [in the city] the roof is well-built . . . unlike there" in Cuyamecalco, her hometown (Fig. 5.3).

5.3 A typical house in rural Mexico
(source: López 1993)

Thus, the conflict between the two opposite poles involved in the CAP appears again in roofing systems. When peasants bring from the countryside their traditional roof-building knowledge, this contrasts with the standard concrete-roofing they encounter in modern Mexico City. The juxtaposition of materials and forms of roofing systems, in the reproduction of vernacular housing, occurs in the city in two possible ways. One, the most socially plausible (but also the less common), repeats the patterns dictated by the urban elite: pitched roofs ought to be built with industrialized materials and modern techniques. Users of *residenciales,* in addition to paying for the costly formwork required the pouring of concrete roofs, often import shingles to make the material compatible with a style popularly thought as of being 'international'. It is not merely the roof itself that would be more costly for the migrants, but the additional expense involved in ornamenting the facade that such a house would require. As a result of their high building cost, houses constructed in this fashion are so rare that they are seen as a desirable social icon. They become a social symbol to which the poorest sectors of urban society, like Chalco, are content just to aspire to. Don Bernabe is clearly attracted to the possibility of having a pitched roof when he states: "the house that I like the most, [is] that one that is there on the corner. It has a very nice figure; it also has its pitched roofs" (Fig. 5.4).

5.4 One of the favorite houses among the informants in Chalco

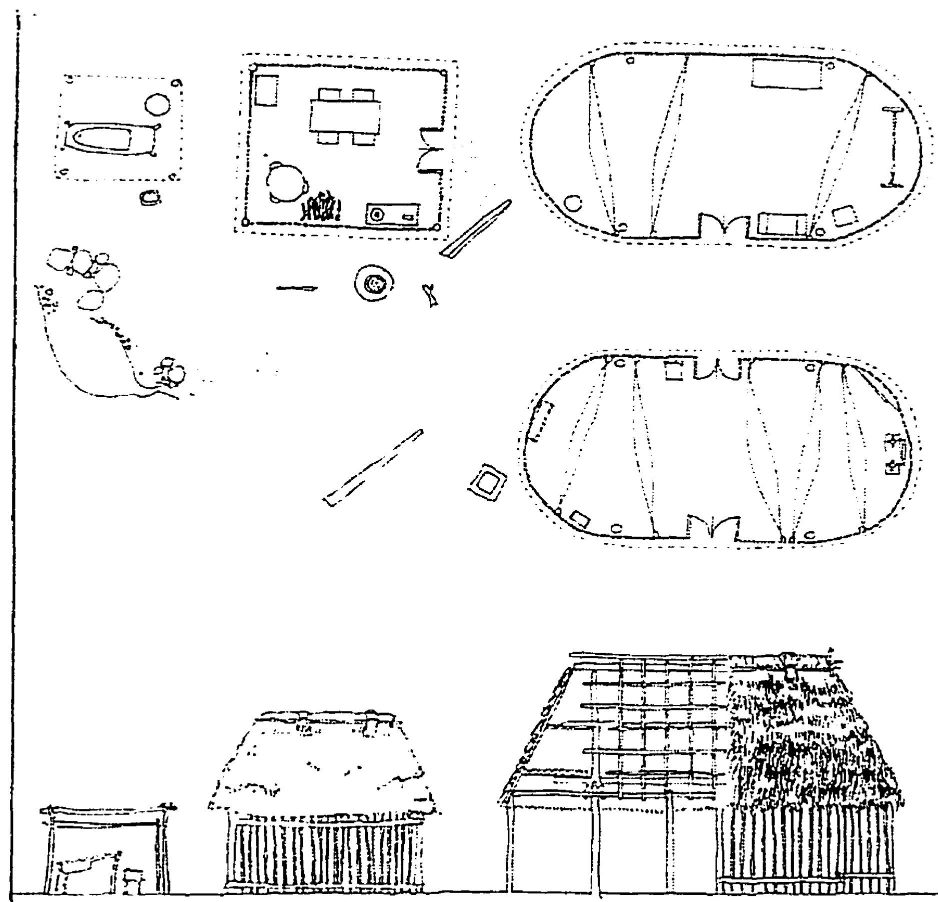
There is a more affordable alternative to the building of pitched roofs in Chalco; but it is not as popular as the first one because it is unfavorable for migrants' adaptation. Those migrants who cannot afford concrete (the 'only' material a pitched roof can be built with in the city, considering the social factor) use iron sheets instead. Apart from the obvious deficiencies in climatic performance, the result is socially inconvenient. Therefore, Graciela Ignacio would like her house to be built with a flat roof because she has "never had it. I always lived in a *dos aguas* (pitched-roof) house, made of straw. I, sincerely, didn't want to have a house like this" in the city. Don Danilo, when asked about his preferences regarding this issue, admitted that construction made according to rural taste would be self-defeating for his family's CAP. He likes pitched roofs "only in a country-house, not here." Don Javier Rodríguez also admitted he liked having a pitched roof house in San Francisco, Oaxaca, but "not here, not any more; here one changes."

In short, a pitched roof in Chalco, when it is not built with urban technology, can be a sign of failure to adapt. There are then two alternatives left for migrants if they are to reproduce a pitched roofs. Preferably, it will have to be in the same materials that the elite uses, namely concrete. If they cannot afford this solution, as is almost universally the case in Chalco, migrants would have to build a standard-type of roof and tackle their CAP through other means.

5.2.3 The CAP designs layouts

Self-help transformations in the layout of Chalco's housing can also reflect adaptation to the socio-economic requirements of Mexico City. Consistent with most housing patterns in the world, room arrangements differ from a rural to an urban environment. Houses in rural Oaxaca are organized in such a different way than those in the city, that even the names of its components are inconsistent with the urban terminology. A *casa*, house, in rural Mexico is nothing but one of the constituent rooms of the house as a whole, that which reciprocally in the standard house in urban Mexico would be considered just one room. Bernabe Castillo asserted that in his dwelling in Oaxaca there were two casas, one being the kitchen and the other the core room. The latter, in the context of rural Mexico, is referred to in Spanish as *casa grande*, big house. This name seems appropriate for an

open area where most living activities take place: sleeping, meeting and sometimes eating. All informants agreed that since ancient times "the *casa grande* doesn't have any division;" that it is sometimes complemented by smaller *casas* such as a warehouse, a granary and, in rare cases, a kitchen; and that the house lacks bathrooms and bedrooms, even conceptually (Fig. 5.5).



5.5 The various *casas* of a Mexican rural dwelling
(source: López 1993)

On the other hand, layout patterns of city houses, which are sensitive to the complex variations of urban society, are more rapidly mutable. In Chalco, housing layouts have clearly varied according to the socio-economic changes that Mexico has undergone after the years of crisis (which coincide with the rising of most squatter settlements in the Third World). During 'the lost decade', when Chalco's land was being occupied, migrants overcrowded their plots as a defensive mechanism against deprivation. Confined to a limited plot, migrants defined a heap of rooms as the housing pattern in the first stages of Chalco's evolution. They realized that keeping the family together represented an efficient financial strategy to cope with scarcity. Not only did the new generations avoid extra expenditure by staying with their parents after marriage, but they and their families also contributed their incomes to the household. Five or six informants counted on the incomes of their children-in-law for living expenses for the household, as well as for building the communal house. Houses built during the 1980s are of poor construction quality and cover little built area per user. They do not just reflect an attachment to the rural life-style, as is commonly assumed. Rather, they are evidence of the fact that the major portion of the money earned by the residents, instead of being used for housing-related expenses, was used for the basic essentials for survival.

The fortunes of the migrants changed (although not in every case), thanks to the relative benefits received as a result of the 'economic miracle' that Mexico experienced in the late 80s (see Chapter Three). Economic liberalization certainly brought about quantitative benefits to some squatter settlers. Although neoliberalism has increasingly been criticized, many marginals have enjoyed extended income from it. Profits were obtained, albeit temporarily, from the so-called 'private enterprises' of the informal economy. In addition, properties were regularized by Solidaridad, so that the people of Chalco now enjoy ownership. Thanks to these benefits, migrants increased their chances for upward mobility, at least for the immediate future.

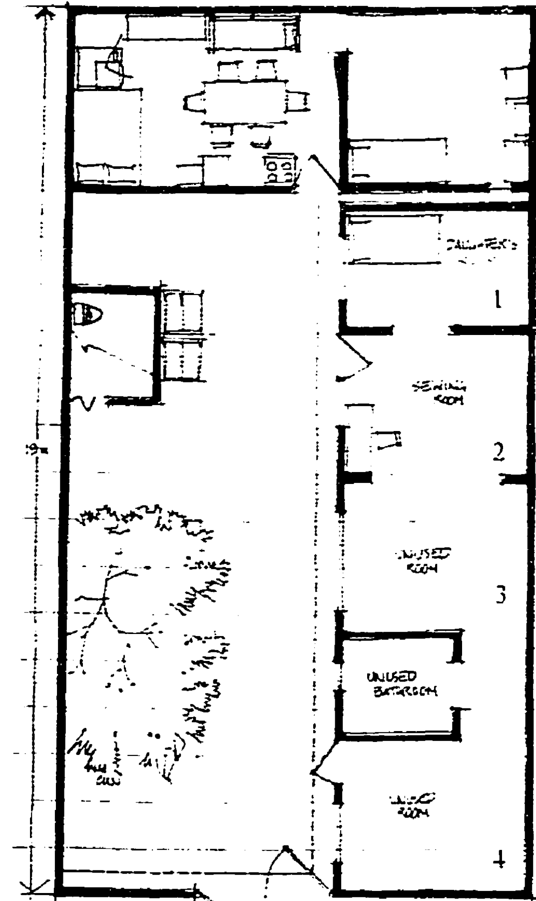
After basic subsistence was covered, migrants invested their little 'extra' cash in their houses, maximizing resources appropriately so that housing transformations could serve

as a vehicle for hastening their cultural adaptation to the urban society. In most instances, additional, more consolidated rooms were built in houses with apparently living-related functions. Now, however, additional rooms are not required, since the individual entrepreneurship promoted by Solidaridad caused the disintegration of extended families. Thus, it was for a different reason that, beginning in the early 90s, migrants built additional rooms. They realized that square meters of housing gave them the status of the common urbanite for whom material possessions characterize success. Doña Monica inadvertently revealed that her main social goal in the city was to become as successful as a neighbor who, she mentioned, "has three houses in this block alone." By and large, when informants were questioned about their favorite house in the neighborhood, they immediately admitted preference for "big ones."

Migrants add built area presumably because, although the size of their household decreases or is maintained, their property value increases and they acquire more assets this way. However, it was interesting to discover the way in which migrants always figure out a use for the newest spaces. Bernabe Castillo, for example, was not clear about the use of the four new rooms that he was currently building in his house. Initially, he stressed they would be used as "rooms for families" (meaning more rooms for his family, probably bedrooms). But he later conceded that four would be too many rooms for the households' needs, stating instead that "one [of them] is going to be [serve] as a shop." He also admitted later that the old construction, which was to be used as storage rooms once the family moves out from it, is too big for the "storage of all the things that are broken."

Like Don Bernabe, most migrants try hard to justify building extra rooms that, although seemingly more sturdy than the existing ones, remain mostly unused. The four new rooms on Doña Monica's plot (Fig. 5.6) were built partly with the hope that her married daughter would return to the household. The finished rooms remain empty, waiting for her daughter's, and her grandchild's, return.

Meanwhile, Doña Monica, her husband and her younger children occupy two rooms at the back of the plot that are 10 years older and of an area more or less equivalent to half that of the newest additions. Such a traditional act of generosity and collectivity keeps Doña Monica living humbly, but she is still motivated to build more rooms for her descendants "because perhaps the other [referring to the eldest daughter] will come back." For each one of her two other children, she also has planned building a new story on top of the new rooms.



5.6 Extra rooms: "just in case" the children stay with the household

In sum, although informants always figure out practical reasons for building their extra spaces, the social function of such a phenomenon should not be ignored. Either in use or empty, new rooms are influential in the adaptation of migrants to the point that Don Danilo uses the following reasoning to describe success in the CAP of migrants: "There are people who have excelled. For example, there are people who . . . now they have at least two concrete-roofed rooms, or even have three more up," on a second floor.

5.2.4 The second-floor myth.

The practice of accumulating built area is even more significant in modern Mexican society when the housing growth is vertical; a second story has become a strong icon of urban success. People in Chalco also wish to have a second floor in their houses, a longing that has become so popular that some migrants visualize the new floor only as an idealized symbol. Liborio Dominguez stated early in the informal interview that he did

not plan any addition in the future. At the end of the same session, when he was asked to describe how he wished his house to be in the future, he answered: "I want some columns so that they carry the upper [floor]." Such columns for him did not depict a practical component of his house (on which a second floor would need to be supported, in the case that more area was required by living functions), as much as they are symbols of vertical growth. Similarly, in the most recent intervention, Doña Monica, instead of planning the future growth of her house horizontally, invested in costly solutions such as using "thick rods below, and excavated fifteen meters under the ground." These were intended to support the two planned floors which she might never build.

5.2.5 Consolidation

In the phenomenon of self-help housing, 'consolidation' is the ideal that enables people to live in a permanent process of construction. To a migrant, consolidation essentially means having a house which is built of more 'urban' materials, in this case concrete, steel, etc. Temporary shack-like structures, erected right after the illegal acquisition of land, can be easily removed. So, consolidation becomes an expression of solidity and stability, since a concrete structure is perceived as being more secure. For residents, the concept represents protection of ownership rights and eventual legalization of their property. However, whatever the durability and construction quality of any migrants' houses, they are to them always vulnerable to change, or *provisionales,* as informants admitted. Don Danilo candidly describes why a house can never be considered fully consolidated: "There is an idea, which always is cyclical, that is: if you build a house, no matter how nice it is, within two or three years you won't like it. When I am building it seems well, but soon I don't like it . . . [houses] are *provisionales*, one is never satisfied."

If consolidation is essentially a motivating ideal, the key to the social status of a migrant lies in how much his house is consolidated. The degree of consolidation achieved depends primarily on the amount of cash that is available to migrants for the purchase of building materials. However, the affordability of materials and techniques that provide structural stability does not guarantee consolidation. Also taken into account are the social

significance of materials and architectural forms. For instance, pitched roofs are a less socially satisfactory form for squatters in Chalco not only because they are considered a cheap rural form (as seen in section 5.2.2), but also because they are commonly associated with the image of the early stages of housing consolidation. Bernabe Castillo instinctively rejects the idea of building a pitched roof because he relates this form to a provisional shack (which would mean that his transition was incomplete). The discussion, during the informal interview, about choosing pitched roofs for his house in Chalco never touched on the materials that would be used. However, it may be assumed, from his response on the question of roof forms, that the roofs would be built with provisional, and unstable, materials: "If I make a sloped-roof house, the air comes and blows it away."

Unlike the case of Don Bernabe, money is so scarce for Don Danilo that he builds primarily what is strictly indispensable (brick walls and iron-sheet roofs). He admits to not being able to afford "building materials [that] are too expensive, one cannot build any more with bricks, iron rods, sand, gravel." But apparently he does not feel frustrated, because material achievements are irrelevant to his welfare, even windows and doors for him "are secondary things." Again, as in other building patterns, consolidation ultimately depends on the individual values placed on material possessions.

5.3 Building Materials

5.3.1 Building materials in Chalco

Chalco is as gray as most squatter settlements in the industrializing world. From the top of Xico hill, which borders the valley where the slum settled, one can observe the uniform presence of unfinished concrete-block walls and exposed rods. The outlook is likely the most obvious evidence that the building industry has not been able to make a wider variety of building materials either affordable or acceptable to migrants (Fig. 5.7). In addition to being the cheapest option for migrants to build a 'consolidated' house, the system of concrete slabs and blocks is the safest way to build in an 'urban' manner, if social failure is considered to be a risk. Don Jose, using an analogy, describes what happens when a migrant dares not to build with the socially admissible materials: "It is

like when you are invited to a party, that [takes place] in a straw house . . . it isn't going to look well, perhaps people [would] criticize . . . it [building with straw] is nice but here [in the city] is not the proper place to do it." Bernabe Castillo also has reduced, through his CAP, the options he has to consolidate a house in the city to "cement, brick, sand, gravel and rods." Correspondingly, Doña Lilia is aware that her decision to build with concrete blocks is due not only to the affordability of this material but also to its social significance. She builds with such standard materials "not because it is cheaper; it is simply because that is the way one builds here."

5.7 Chalco and the *cerro Xico* in the background

In the building systems of the city, the structure of the house and the appearance of materials are disassociated from each other, unlike in village housing. In Chalco, structure is mainly a uniform skeleton affordable to almost anyone, and appearance is the variable skin that migrants arrange according to individual possibilities, skills, and preferences. It was found that what matters to the CAP more than any other physical characteristic of the material, is its appearance. Don Plutarco routinely follows the urban practice of covering materials in order to fake their appearance. Thus, he is hesitant to build his house with adobe, because it would be "the same [as if it was built with bricks] because the adobe is not visible . . . supposing I include adobe here and I add plaster to it (like in the Mexico City's building custom), I wouldn't see the adobe. It is not worth it, they [neighbors] wouldn't know if it is really adobe . . . I, by my side, would say that my house is made of adobe but, for the sake of showing it off, it wouldn't look nice."

Remarkably, the most popular 'skin' identified in Chalco's housing is a certain type of plaster for interiors called *tiról*. Six out of thirteen respondents admitted such finishing to be the preferred fashion. Its advantages include relative affordability, little required skills to be applied and, more importantly, its social meaning that identifies migrants' houses with middle-class *residenciales*, where the fashion started in Mexico City. Other finishes, such as wood, are discarded because of their high cost. Some others such as live-color paint over plaster are even unthinkable, because their usage would unmask rural inclinations, inconvenient for the CAP. Discussing his ideal house, Don Danilo mentioned that he has "always liked orange and purple colors," although his facade was currently painted a more sober maroon.

5.3.2 Sense of permanence of building materials

When a certain housing consolidation is achieved by the use of standard materials, migrants feel they have finally settled down in the city (bearing in mind that not every one has been able to afford to build in the urban fashion). Those fortunate migrants who consider themselves permanent settlers of Chalco feel anchored to the new land they have obtained, and which they will never leave. Don Pedro seems happy to assure that, after the

first uncertain years, his attachment to Chalco has increased. While being asked about the chances of leaving the dwelling he lives in now, he answered he would not do it: "not any more, because my children are here, they were born here, and I built my home here" (with plastered brick-walls and finished concrete roofs).

Unfortunately, for the urban image of Chalco, aesthetic monotony prevails as a consequence of the fact that not every building material provides a sense of permanence. Among the variety of materials available in the market of Mexico City, only solid-looking materials have been adopted by the migrant community. Migrants would not be content with any material if it is not dense enough, no matter the level of technology used to produce it. The reason is, presumably, that they resist the influence of material values that distinguish urban society. Traditional people in Chalco cling to a rural appreciation of building materials that is more related with their physical characteristics. To probe this argument it is sufficient to look at the meaning in Mexico of the traditional term *casa de material* (material house). Repeatedly used as a parameter by the informants, this term denotes a clear distinction between 'material' and 'non-material' houses, assigning to the former a higher status because they are solidly built.

Indeed, in reality, migrants' decision-making often involves contradictions. The ingrained perception of traditional peoples is opposed urban notions about the issue of building materials since, for the latter, choice of materials tends to be more influenced by visual qualities than the former (see section 5.3.1). Migrants seem to maintain a deep-rooted attachment to materials that provide a sense of security and permanence, as do adobe and stone, the indigenous building materials in Oaxaca. In Chalco, it is crucial that the material be solid and mineral in nature ("*de la tierra*"). In addition, it matters, though somewhat less, whether building materials are of rural or urban manufacture.

5.3.3 Social rejection of rural materials

A *casa de material* is socially accepted as long as the materials it is built with are not rural by nature. If the house, for instance, was built with adobe or stone, it would be

categorized as nothing more than a *casa de material* that is inappropriate to the city. Indigenous materials that generally have greater aesthetic appeal in professional spheres are simply disdained in Chalco. The hypothetical house (made of adobe, clay tiles, wood, and stone) that migrants were asked to imagine in Chalco is socially categorized as: "*pobrecita*" (poor) or "provisional, too simple . . . and not a good house." Conversely, these social attributes are applied to rural housing as well by a migrant who has assimilated this perspective. Judging by his description of rural housing, Don Luis Gómez has, to some extent, been seduced by the urban way of thinking; "Lately, houses are also made with bricks . . . before they were only made with stone and wood . . . but now there are good constructions."

In summary, participants in this study generally exclude from their preferences urban housing in its early stages of development and, with respect to materials, houses built with: (1) ephemeral materials, especially those produced industrially that do not provide any sense of permanence; (2) any rural material, even if it is dense enough to provide users with a sense of permanence; (3) finishes and colors that could possibly reveal rural inclinations; and (4) materials that do not correspond to a 'modern taste', with respect to each migrant's individual appreciation of modernity. After discarding all these options most migrants in Chalco build their houses with concrete blocks and concrete slabs, a choice that results in the monotonous environment described above. Nevertheless, these standard materials have at least been able to provide a certain sense of permanence to migrants in their new residence, with which they can feel more confident to face the odds of the CAP.

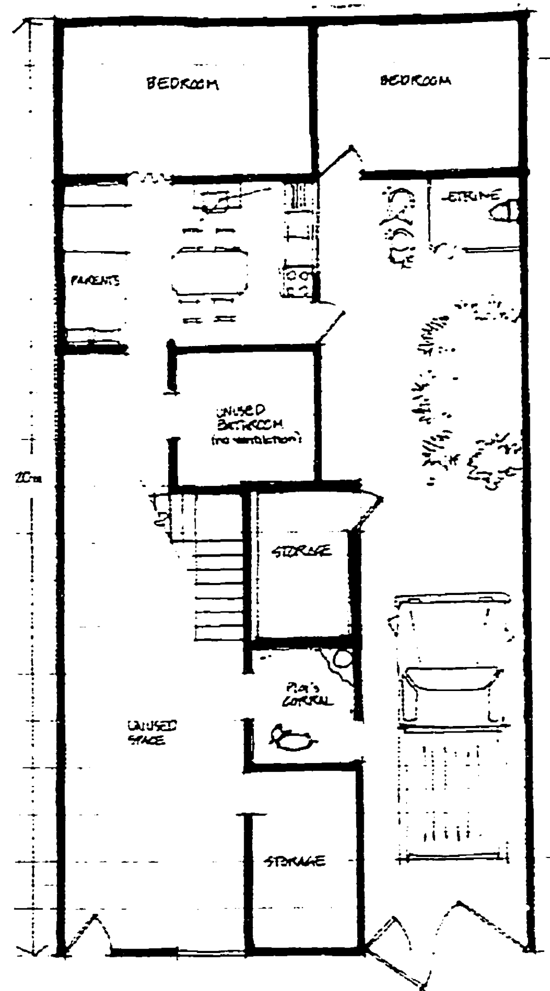
5.4 Architectural Elements

5.4.1 The social function of the facade

Before deconstructing the architectural elements of Chalco's housing in order to relate them to the CAP, it is relevant to make a first distinction between interior decoration and facades. This study revealed that in Chalco these two independent elements, instead of being mere parts of an integrated house, contradict each other in their functions.

On the one hand, migrants' attention to interior spaces, by molding the material most connected to their life, could reveal much of the traditional personality of their users. As an example of a general pattern, modest spaces are the outcome of Don Pedro's introversion. His interiors reflect the fact that he "almost never [either hosts visitors or goes out] . . . I don't like that, I am rather home-loving." He prefers staying at home, keeping himself active in "just arranging my plants; I help also my children with their homework." Such traditional values recalls a feeling for rural tranquillity. Interior spaces become a re-creation of the rural environment in the form of escapism from the outside, from the harsh reality of migrants in the city. "Anyway, inside one's own house anyone can do whatever one wants," as Liborio Dominguez put it.

Don Plutarco Uribe, similarly, perceives himself as an isolated person because social relationships in the city are not developed as they are in rural areas. He recalls with nostalgia that in Zapotitlán Lagunas Oaxaca, the social system "is very different, because [there] you go out wherever you want and everybody knows you and greets you, and it is more fun." For that and other reasons, Don Plutarco has developed a small pig-farm in his house in Mexico City. Typical elements of urban housing, such as stairs, living-dining room, bathroom and the ubiquitous TV set, coexist with sounds and smells that recall the countryside. Such a combination is nothing more than tradition and modernity conflicting in the intimacy of a self-help home of Chalco (Fig. 5.8).

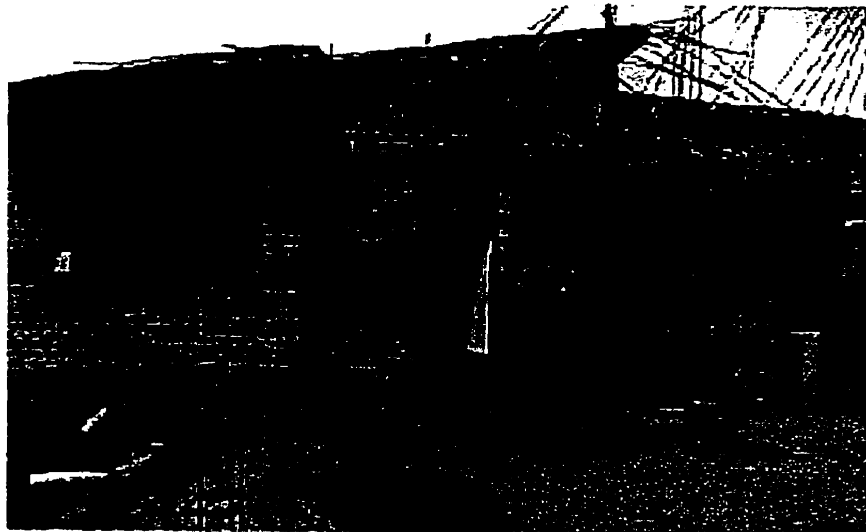


5.8 Tradition and modernity conflicting in the intimacy of Don Placido's home

Facades, on the other hand, are one of the most important vehicles through which migrants achieve a higher social status in urban society. In different styles, and to varying degrees, households invest attention, time and money in the external appearance of their house. Once, all facades in Chalco's housing were, in essence, blank. Through time, migrants have incorporated the elements, forms, ornaments and colors necessary to express their desire to become urban. The residents transform their facades with the deliberate intention of affecting the social perception of the community towards themselves. Doña Lilia, for instance, is perfectly aware of the impact her facade has in the community. She notices people on the street interrupting their walking to examine her house "and who knows what they'd say: 'it is nice,' 'it is ugly,' who knows? They remain looking [for a while] and then they talk . . . would they say: 'I like that house' or 'I don't like that house?' . . . I don't mean to be pretentious, but it happens that way." Furthermore, in Chalco as in most housing across the world, the facade is considered to extend even beyond the front wall. People care about any element such as a garden, or any other ornament or symbol, exposed to the exterior because "that is the kind of thing that gives good looks to the house," as Doña Lilia says.

However, it is also fair to note that other reasons, such as security, also influence the design of the facade. Doña Monica has a good explanation for the fact that criminals have never assaulted her house: "It might be because [people] see me poor and [they] may say: 'What can I steal from a poor [woman]? Nothing'." She knows that her unattractive facade may be a defensive mechanism against thieves, and perhaps for that reason she keeps it so.

In summary, we have seen that two elements in migrant housing combine with each other to receive the maximum amount of users' attention and/or resources. On the one hand, interior arrangement is mostly a clear outcome of pure functional usage; on the other, the elaborate treatment of external facades is primarily meant to indicate social fulfillment (Figs. 5.9, 5.10, 5.11).



5.9, 5.10, 5.11 Three views of the same house

Once again, the physical result of the conflict between interior arrangement versus facades depends on individual attitudes, but in a general sense, migrants in Chalco invest more in facades. Interiors are not treated with the same degree of importance because they are not often exposed to neighborly visits, a reflection of the decreased social and communal interaction characteristic of such an urban setting. Those few who have passed the private threshold agree that there maybe a large discrepancy between interior and exterior: "My brother in law has his good *fachadita* (facade) but honestly, on the inside, it [the house] is not good." This informant afterwards reserves her opinion when questioned about her favorite house in the neighborhood: "Yes, it looks pretty in the outside, but I need to see the inside." Empirically, Doña Graciela is aware that an effect of the CAP is that the finished quality of the interior of a house is not necessarily consistent with its facade.

5.4.2 Living/dining room

The first space of migrants' houses to be analyzed, simply because it is more exposed to the criticism of potential visitors, is the living-dining room. If users can afford it, this space receives the necessary treatment to positively impact their CAP in Mexico City. Migrants are encouraged, by the commercial pressure of a consumer society, to adopt the idea that social success can be expressed in living-dining areas, among other means. Generally, migrants' concern for their large living-dining rooms reflects their need to attain social status, an integral component of the urban society. If one intends to make a place for oneself in the consumer society of Mexico City, such space must be the most 'modern,' ample, sumptuous and luxurious room of the house.

Unfortunately, all these benefits of modern comfort are not to be enjoyed by the family. Living-dining rooms are intended to serve more as exhibition areas for impressing the visitor than as a center of family life. These rooms are literally untouched unless it is for 'special occasions'. This converts them into 'cold' spaces, as unused spaces are popularly labeled. For instance, Don Javier and his family have been able to construct a large living-dining room equipped with commodities such as a stereo system and a (seemingly comfortable) sofa. However, they rarely live in this space. Ironically, the most important

room for them, instead, is their modest family business (a grocery store). They explain that this happens "because we are almost never in the house, all day we are here in the store; for instance, now we close only at ten and go up to sleep; we are here all the week." Thus, the living-dining room at the Rodríguez's represents another contradiction that certain CAPs can produce. The effort and money that were invested with the intention of making a social impact contrasts with the simplicity of their shop. Paradoxically, it is in this small and informal space where social contact with neighbors gives a lively richness to the Rodríguez house.

5.4.3 Bathroom

The bathroom is an element that becomes relevant to the CAP of migrants, considering that it is only when they move to the city that it becomes one of the housing needs. In fact, when some migrants, prior to arriving in Chalco, inhabited rental housing in the inner city, bathrooms were not integrated with the main functions of the house. In order to use the common bathroom in *vecindades* (slums), migrants still had to deal with going outdoors as well as some other complications. Don Danilo tells how he got used to bathrooms in the *vecindad* where he experienced urban life for the first time. Now, after 25 years in Mexico City, he recognizes that "one is adapted to the conditions . . . although at the beginning one doesn't become accustomed to it; through time [one] gets used to the fact that you live in such a way." The bathroom is a component of migrant housing that takes longer to be assimilated. In that view, the bathroom in the *vecindades* meant a step towards getting used to the integrated one to which migrants aspire as urbanites in Chalco.

The transformation of the bathroom in Chalco, however, does not seem to follow practical logic. In the first stages of growth, the obvious necessity of having a room for excreting (not showering) was satisfied very simply; migrants in Chalco built a shack-like room (an outhouse) as far away as possible from the main family's activities, analogous to the way it occurred in the open spaces of villages (Fig. 5.12). It is not merely a rural tradition transported to the city, as could be simplistically assumed; it is also the lack of infrastructure that delays a bathroom's integration with the rest of the house.

5.12 A "provisional bathroom"

Thanks to the infrastructure interventions of Solidaridad, starting in the late 80s, migrants were able to integrate the bathroom with the internal functioning of the house. However, this is a theoretical possibility, because although public sewage and water supply have been installed, households rarely have individual connections. Relative 'financial success' in Mexico City has allowed, in most cases, the construction of a bathroom. However, insufficient cash and negligence in installing the piping have resulted in only a few bathrooms functioning with services in Chalco. At the stage of the housing process when the study was conducted, seven out of thirteen households had built indoor bathrooms, but five out of these seven were out of service. At the moment, and perhaps not on purpose, each type of bathroom accomplishes a different function. The outdoor bathroom actually fulfills the practical use it was built for. The newer, indoor one, as it is generally shown to visitors, stands as a social symbol of achieved urbanity.

5.4.4 Staircase

As does the bathroom, the staircase represents an icon of modernity and urbanity in Chalco. Although lack of money has not permitted construction of a second floor (see section 5.2.4), staircases are ready to serve "for when I need it," according to Don

Plutarco. Among the five staircases that exist in the informants' houses, three are not serving the purposes for which they were built. There is not yet a second story to go to. Instead, such staircases accomplish the expressive function of facilitating the CAP of their owners (Fig. 5.13).

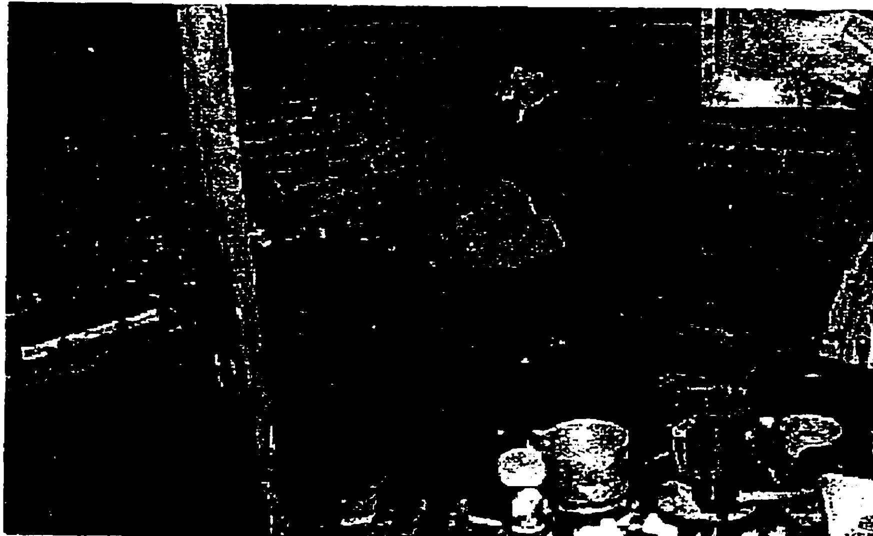
5.13 Doña Consuelo's stairway to ...urbanity

Ultimately, the issue of whether or not these three unused staircases (as well as the five out-of-service bathrooms mentioned in the previous section) presently satisfy their practical functions is not as important to visitors as the social impact of their presence.

5.4.5 Kitchen

Urban infrastructure also allows and causes the integration of a kitchen into migrant houses. Remarkably, adaptation to this room is easier for those migrants who were accustomed to a central fire for cooking in the main house of their village. Don Bernabe still feels more at home with the kitchen organized in the same space where he and his wife sleep "because it feels more comfortable, more immediate, [for example] if one gets up and feels hungry"(Fig. 5.14). However, adaptation could be more difficult for those migrants who built their kitchen detached from the *casa grande* when in the village. In

these cases, they are forced to change their habits. Doña Graciela, as a point in case, was advised to integrate the kitchen to her house, but she rejected the idea.



5.14 "...if one gets up and feels hungry..."

5.4.6 Garden

Extreme lack of green space in Chalco can be attributed to overurbanization during the process of industrialization of Mexico City. However, discrepancies between rural and urban behaviors about the environment also make a negative contribution. The traditional notion migrants have of nature is affected while they adapt to urban life. For rural dwellers, a village's entire open space would be the garden itself, but in the city, they must get used to thinking of gardens as small pieces of private property in front of their homes (Fig. 5.15). Any city dweller, in a way, exercises power over his/her property's garden by taking care of it and by confining it. By comparison, migrants in Chalco are more inclined to interact with the environment as though it had no boundaries.

In addition, most informants were raised in villages with the notion that nature should be used in a sustainable way, as land, among other justifications, ensures the conservation of the primary source of food. Thus, they make use of their piece of land in order to survive. Doña Monica enthusiastically related that she looks after "a small garden because at least

I have a place where I can sow mint and *epasote*" (three more informants stated that they periodically grow corn in their properties). She obtains from her garden some food for subsistence, instead of merely beauty and delight as it would be appropriate to do as an urbanite. But open spaces in lots are so small (those few informants who do garden use less than 10 sq.m of their plot), and soil is so infertile in Chalco, that neither of these objectives is achieved. As a consequence, in response to the urban approach to gardening, little attention is given to gardens in Chalco. Notably, the term 'garden' is mostly used by migrants to refer to the areas that are left after the house-building process.

But not all the blame should be placed on the rural-urban struggle with nature. Inadequate urban design by those who illegally divided Chalco into lots, as well as later official interventions, are equally responsible. They contributed to the lack of awareness among migrants for their environment, because migrants never see green open spaces as part of their living space. It is possible that, in their experience, living in the city means living without green spaces. To mention just one example, in some areas in Chalco, one needs to walk for up to two kilometers to enjoy green spots which can hardly be called parks. Subsequently, the lack of everyday contact with nature discourages gardening habits and environmental awareness as well.

5.15 A 'garden' in Chalco

5.4.7 Balcony

One of the principal intentions of the fieldwork was to explore which of the architectural elements are the most popular in the community. People unanimously admitted a strong desire to own a balcony, despite the fact that only two informants live in two story houses. It also seemed relevant to find the reasons why balconies are so important. Migrants wish to have balconies for reasons other than functional ones. Since time for socialization is diminishing in importance (as discussed in the previous chapter) balconies would mainly be used as expressions of cultural adaptation by those who can afford them. Migrants are aware that through the balcony they can first of all express their economic capacity to build a second story. But also, by building a balcony, they would include in their facades an icon that the middle-class has traditionally reproduced in the city.

Inherited from the Spaniards, balconies have been a connection between the private and public realms for centuries. Recently, in a comparatively short period, social relations in cities have transformed the use of balconies. They are still reproduced by Mexico City's society (particularly the middle-class) but only as a symbolic ornament; people rarely stand or lounge in them. Logically, it is likely that migrants in Chalco, influenced by the same urban culture, would reproduce this element, if only they could afford it.

5.4.8 Marquee

Since financial restrictions prevent most migrants from building balconies, this element has been transformed into a marquee. The marquee originated, at least in urban Mexico, when construction of a second story was discontinued and the balcony was left incomplete. As a preparation for the latter, people extend the roofing slab 80-120 cm over the limits of the front facade and along the entire width of the plot. One-story housing (approximately 80 percent of Chalco), then, needs a justification for the unfinished balcony. Marquees are meant to produce shade for the facades or to protect pedestrians against the rain; but in practice most marquees over sidewalks do not have any practical use. They are too short to be anything more than an ornament.

In one two-story house, the marquee is accessed through a door and is meant to serve as a leisure area, although this is not actually the case. The Rodríguez's 'semi-balcony', as this household calls the element, is so narrow that it cannot perform the functions of a traditional balcony. Besides, it has never been used, as its lack of railing does not offer any safety. Simply a strain of the traditional balcony, marquees are intended to express materially that the migrants inhabiting the house behind it are wealthy enough to buy urbanity and, except for the case of the Rodríguez family, that they hope to build a second story one day.

5.4.9 Windows

Windows become a relevant element in this analysis, starting from the fact that they almost do not exist in rural housing in Oaxaca. The above described *casa grande* rarely has one opening in addition to the door; when present, the opening generally lacks both the window frame and glass. For migrants, the significance of a window as both an independent element and as a connection to the public realm is an output of the urban experience.

The prevailing urban fashion compensates for the migrants' lack of window-expertise, influencing their decision-making in the housing process. Aluminum (particularly of a golden color) is the most preferred material for them in Mexico City as "it is used but only in *residenciales*," as Liborio Dominguez stated. In addition, these frames are even more in demand when the window contains glass with special features. Don Joél said that he would like to build his dream house "with some excellent windows, those ones made of aluminum . . . and smoked glass." Like him, the majority of the informants admitted aspiring to the opulence of aluminum frames, although only two of them have been able to afford such a luxury that costs two times more than iron ones, the next choice.

5.4.10 Garage door

The last element to be analyzed in this chapter is the garage door. In the initial stage of construction, migrants solve the design of the main entrance in a similar manner to the way they did in the village. Doors are only big enough to allow access to users, and the materials they were made of did not pretend to guarantee safety against intrusion. Later on, when the opportunity to 'design' the frontal facade arrived, and its social importance was realized by migrants, the garage door was included.

In urban Mexico, the garage door is a standard housing product, personalized only by the selection of a households' favorite color. Steel gates, of 2.5-3m width by about the same height, do not have a practical use in eight out of the thirteen selected cases in Chalco. The reason is simple: families do not have a car, at least not yet. However, informants demonstrated that an aspiration can be a valid justification for the presence of a garage door. Consuelo Fernandez believes "one must have a garage door though you don't have a car." Don Javier, who for a moment intruded into the interview, supported that "someday one might have a car." Certainly families anticipated the possible presence of a car in their garages, but meanwhile the garage door suggests, more importantly, that the family who lives behind it owns a car. Garage doors, implying the possession of the most direct symbol of urbanity and modernity, are signs that migrants want, and try, to achieve success in their CAP in the city.

This analysis concludes with an outline of what self-help housing indicates about its users, in this case migrants in the process of adapting to the urban culture. The practice of self-help housing in Chalco, as in any capitalist city of the Third World, reflects outcomes of social relations intrinsic to an urban class-society. People's aspirations are mirrored in facades, balconies, staircases, finishes, or any other ornament capable of expressing the desires to achieve social status as new urbanites, i.e., 'to modernize'. But traditional views of migrants are rarely consistent with urban systems in modern Mexico City and the clash brings about particular outcomes. The evolution of forms, layouts, and architectural elements is neither consistent with the modern building technology available in the city,

nor a reflection of the vernacular housing that is reproduced in the countryside. Being somewhere in between tradition and modernity, migrant housing in Chalco is undergoing a process of evolution that cannot be determined in advance but yields valuable information on residents as it unfolds.

Chapter Six Conclusions

With an analysis of the social and architectural patterns of the community of Chalco, this thesis concludes its endeavor to comprehend the cultural adaptation process of rural migrants. However, before drawing generalizations about this phenomenon, one methodological consideration needs to be emphasized again. Admittedly, what is referred to as 'the culture of Chalco' in this study is mainly illustrated by a small number of informants, in comparison to the total population of the community. For that reason, the qualitative approach used in this study could be exposed to scientific criticism, in particular to a call for statistical investigation. However, in order to draw the following conclusions, this study relied on three elements: in-depth interviews (Chapters Four and Five); recent research, specifically on Chalco (Chapter Three); and theories of urbanization and development (Chapter Two). Ultimately, extrapolating from the micro to the macro level is preferable to the type of reductionist analysis that isolates 'the culture of poverty' as a general explanation for a community's condition. The opposite scope is, however, to a certain extent conjectural; as seen in Chapter One, there is not yet a scientific model to accurately articulate local and global levels of sociocultural change.

This thesis takes the same stance as that of Eric Wolf, according to whom "any culture of the world can be understood only in terms of the international system" (Wolf 1982; quoted in Lewellen 1995, 62). Based on the reviewed literature, it is possible to assume that the cultural patterns of the randomly selected sample are quite likely to appear in the rest of Chalco. Assessing the relevance of the present findings to other parts of the Third World is the task of further empirical research. As for this investigation, the aim is to provoke open discussion about the following argument.

The culture of Chalco is influenced by a complex set of both local and global factors, yet comparatively, it seems that the former are overshadowed by the latter. Global influences are fundamental to the destiny of newcomers to Mexico City. Rural migrants directly suffer the strong preponderance of the world-economy, which is currently directed

towards the homogenization of all cultures into a global one. The question of whether or not such a transformation is right falls beyond the scope of the study. What this thesis argues, first and foremost, is that in moving towards their inclusion in 'the global village', migrants have limited resources to be part of the "culture-ideology of consumerism." Such an inclusion is necessary, as far as the survival of the global capitalist system is concerned (Sklair 1995, 48). However, most rural-urban migrants in the Third World, unable to buy themselves symbols of a 'modern' lifestyle, are marginalized from the possibility to materially express urban success, an important aspect of social mobility.

As compared to their exclusion from the cultural-ideological sphere of the global system, migrants' integration into its other two constituent spheres, economy and politics, seems even less achievable. Unlike the aimed total inclusion in the culture-ideology of consumerism, the global capitalist system can carry on with partial or no input of migrants in political or economic practices (ibid., 47). That is because national and international elites monopolize the means that determine most of the decision-making processes of society. For instance, it is the 'multinational elite' in Mexico which has adopted the Western model of development (which is the dominant force in Mexican urban culture) to be reproduced and re-interpreted by the urban poor. Thus, contrary to the view of most modernization theorists, migrants remain a marginal sector in society not at all because they cling to folk structures and are unwilling to become urban, or because they lack ties with the rest of society. The reason lies in the kind of relationships they have with the dominant stratum of society, as well as in other factors which are mainly external to their own cultural structures.

The culture and cultural change of Chalco is heavily influenced by the role its inhabitants play in the economic and political structures of the international system. This community happens to have formed in an overurbanized city of a Third World country which increasingly depends on external resources to stimulate development. Chalco has been populated since 1978 by peasants who migrate primarily because they are unable to withstand the decline of international prices for their agricultural products. As the most

viable alternative, they fall to the temptations of Mexico City where they try their chances for a better life. Although they may have found in Chalco a place to settle, the possibility to change their status as urban marginals is blocked, once more, by external forces. This thesis, based on the reviewed literature, identified the three main impediments that migrants must face in order to achieve adaptation in Mexico City; economic, political and social marginalization.

Economically, the community of Chalco, as part of Third World society, has suffered "the negative and disintegrating effects of the globalization of the economy" (Cardoso 1993, 155). Multinational corporations directly marginalize migrants in Chalco as they shift their production from labor-intensive to capital-intensive methods. There is increasingly less room in the new international division of labor for unskilled peasants to integrate into the production system. It is important to remember that this lack of technical expertise of Mexican labor is a global deficiency rooted in colonial times, when the terms of trade benefited the colonizers as exporters of raw materials. Due to this, the dependent economy of Mexico has not been able to develop a competitive industrial base, capable of absorbing rural migrants. As a consequence, most migrants in Chalco, as elsewhere in urban Mexico, survive in the informal sector of the economy.

Secondly, in Chalco there is no political representation of migrants' interests. Up to now, they have been governed by an authoritarian, one-party state. This political system has successfully managed to subdue the participatory power of the masses, but it has not been able to gain full legitimacy from them. Thus, instead of moving towards democracy, the community of Chalco has been depoliticized by populist campaigns. As a result, their integration into urban society has been impeded by a lack of democratic institutions essential to this process. It is debatable whether Mexican politics can be considered a purely local issue. National sovereignty in Mexico, as in many countries in the Third World, is increasingly being undermined by foreign aid, international loans, the opening or closing of markets, and other sources of foreign-power influence.

To these two impediments, a purely domestic factor aggravating the situation can be added: the existence of internal colonialism in Mexico, a social phenomenon rooted in economic and political systems. Earlier settlers, who enjoy comparatively more advantages, exercise a particular social domination over the indigenous newcomers (consistent with internal colonialism discussed in Chapter Two). In this situation, migrants suffer from discriminatory attitudes from other social strata of the city population who hold "racial, linguistic and marked cultural differences, as well as differences of social class" (Johnson 1972, 277; quoted in Kay 1989, 66). In practical terms, marginals try to live up to the social expectations of urban minorities who, in contrast to them, are able to integrate into the new international division of labor. As was emphasized in the anthropological analysis of findings (Chapter Four), social relations in Chalco are consistent with the main arguments of the theory of internal colonialism. Ethnic relations, for instance, are crucial to the success or failure of the CAP of migrants.

In light of the above described limitations, migrants have to develop certain skills that ensure their social acceptance within the society of which they hope to become a part. It becomes important for them to manipulate their material symbols in order to get the best social use out of their generally limited resources. This means that the material culture of Chalco is shaped according to the pressures of Mexico City's class-society. Here, as in any other city of the capitalist world, hierarchies are defined primarily by whether or not one owns the means of production. But, and this is of no less importance, moving up the social ladder also depends on people's ability to manipulate material symbols in order to cause a visual impact, inasmuch as upward mobility is to some extent a social construct.

It was through housing, one such symbol, that the CAP of migrants was deciphered in this thesis. In Chapter Five, migrant housing was discussed as an outcome of migrants' desire to move towards cultural adaptation. However, as seen in the material culture they produce, the marginalization of migrants' economic and political roles in society limit the potential diversity of the built environment. The vernacular reproduction of housing in Chalco is limited to what the CAP allows migrants to display to the urban society.

Despite their attachment to rural materials, migrants reject these and start adopting materials that best adjust to a 'modern taste', other than ephemeral and non solid-looking ones. The outcome is that houses with concrete blocks and concrete slabs proliferate throughout Chalco, forming a monotonous spread of 'concrete boxes'.

Still, if analyzed in detail, migrant housing reflects anything but monotony. The houses of the selected informants are evidence of the creative solutions that migrants in Chalco devise in order to claim their inclusion in urban culture. In spite of their alienation from that culture, and in spite of their limited resources, migrants manifest dynamic forms of behavior and cultural expression. Their living spaces are contradictory outcomes of their CAP, resulting from the tension between their traditional background and their aspirations in the city.

Before continuing this discussion about migrant housing, it is important to clarify that the structures in society that influence the self-help building process are not exempt from challenge by the ultimate decisions of households. However, the psychological factor has not been referred to much in the present analysis because focusing entirely on the individual, i.e., psychological reductionism, would have meant depriving migrants of their role in social systems. Rather, it is worth re-emphasizing that external factors play the most influential role in the decision-making of the housing process. That said, let us now attempt a connection between, on the one hand, structural marginalization (i.e., migrants' lack of economic, political and social functions in the urban culture) and, on the other hand, the evolution of Chalco's housing.

First of all, most informants in this research prioritized appearance over pragmatic solutions when they built their houses. Such an attraction to opulence is gradually developed as a reaction to socio-economic pressure from above. The Mexican elite, in alliance with foreign capital, produces the social images for and exercises the commercial pressure on other strata of society. (Market expansion is attractive to multinational elites especially now that the global economy is becoming increasingly dependent on a growing

demand.) This is done by an aggressive strategy of promotion that enlists the efficient help of the Mexican media. The strategy includes introducing Western trends to the Mexican market, borrowed symbols of 'modern' lifestyle that constitute the urban aspirations of migrants.

Ironically, this phenomenon, referred to as *malinchismo*[1] in its popular connotation, is not compatible with the actual buying power of migrants, who wish to acquire products that suppose technological sophistication. As a consequence, the cost of certain products (especially imported ones) is augmented due to social speculation. This explains why the huge demand for manufactured goods increases as compared to basic goods (a 'quality' for which the Mexican market is well-known). Examples of this trend were described in Chapter Four; desired symbols of 'modern' and 'urban' lifestyles include cars, fashion clothes, electronic devices, etcetera. The same idea goes for housing: the more sophisticated building materials and products are (e.g., aluminum window frames, bathroom fixtures, new building techniques, etc.), the more desirable they become, though also the less affordable to migrants.

This cultural influence, i.e., the flow of imported ideas from the First to the Third World, is the agent which most defines taste in material possessions, migrant housing included. Popular taste for commodities such as building materials is defined by the commercial needs of ruling elites more than by an authentic and personal spontaneity. During the informal interviews, informants recognized that their house had been transformed according to an 'already-defined' taste. Their opinions and attitudes express a desire to adopt the housing patterns of wealthy urbanites, which may or may not be compatible with their own traditions. As marginals have little control over that situation, they invest most of their housing budget on adding the materials, forms and colors that best assign them an urban status and that generally differ from rural patterns of consumption.

[1] *Malinchismo* is a colloquial term traditionally used to describe an ancestral preference Mexicans have for foreign ideas and symbols. The term has its origin in the submissive attitude of La Malinche, an Aztec Indian, during the conquest war in 1521. As the mistress of Hernán Cortés, she revealed some strategic secrets that helped him take Mexico-Tenochtitlán, instead of defending her own people against the conquistador.

From these kinds of findings, described thoroughly in Chapter Five, it seems reasonable to speculate that 'the laws of the market' can be applied to migrant housing in Chalco. Building suppliers may not dare providing a wider variety of materials and techniques with less demand, one which would differ from conventional trends in building. That is perhaps why the urban environment, despite the eclectic results that the CAP is expected to produce, presents the overall monotony described above. Thus, both migrants' preferences as well as innovation and expansion in the local building industry, are subjected to the influence of socio-economic needs and patterns.

Besides changing their consumption patterns, migrants usually increase their consumption levels too. The external agent in this case is also socio-economic pressure to change buying habits to match urban standards. Acquiring material goods should be fundamentally interpreted as migrants' potential cash, that the selling of any belonging represents. However, material gain is perceived in social relations as more than that. Migrants in Chalco are being influenced to modify their traditional world-view according to the "culture-ideology of consumerism." Individual material gain is an important driving force of sociocultural change in Mexico, as it is in any other society of the industrial/capitalist world. Consumerism can be seen in this case as a mechanism through which migrants attempt to exchange their status as marginals (i.e., static objects of socio-economic pressures from above) for that of urbanites. New urbanites, as they go through their CAP, develop a tendency for accumulating material possessions, ranging from basic commodities to luxury objects and to built area.

However, resources have not been maximized to provide better living conditions in Chalco yet. Instead of performing an integral evaluation of their housing needs, people have instinctively added square meters to their housing. Indeed, rooms are assigned a specific use only after their construction, but improved services, such as running water or sewage for instance, are continually postponed. Migrants have realized that extra area, beyond its practical use, could also fulfill an advantageous purpose by symbolically

expressing to urban society their desire to have social status. Evidence of this is found in the clear contrasts between migrants' living conditions and the kind of lifestyle they express through their material culture.

It is important to stress that the incentive for material accumulation is more social than pragmatic in character, at least in the early stages of physical consolidation when cultural adaptation is a priority for migrants. Housing consolidation represents actual economic benefits in the long run (i.e., increases in land and property values), and perhaps migrants are aware of that. However, improvement in their houses mainly responds to their no less crucial social role in the urban setting. It is also likely that migrants know that their social success within the community does not automatically ensure their integration into the urban culture (at least not until streets are paved to attract visitors to witness their material achievements).

Housing transformations in Chalco were possible during the short-lived economic boom of late 80s which benefited, if not all, at least many sectors of Mexican society. The immediate result of the liberalization of the economy at that time was the freer flow of cash in and out of the formal sector. Migrants used profits earned from their informal economic activities to obtain not only artifacts of everyday use, but also building materials and architectural elements consistent with an urban lifestyle in Mexico City. Consequently, it can be said that the physical consolidation of Chalco was to some extent possible thanks to the particular model of political economy that the Mexican government applied in that period. National economic policies share, with the global economic forces described above, accountability for both the destiny of migrants and for the built environment they produce. For that reason, Chapter Three of this thesis suggested a broader understanding of the growth of Chalco, as related to the overall urbanization process of Mexico. That chapter was meant to establish a causal relationship between this national process and historical changes in the political economy of the country, which can be summarized as follows.

In 1910, after 100 years of independence, the Mexican revolution re-integrated a substantial number of people into the national society. The country seemed to be progressing towards the goal of a more egalitarian society, until the revolution began a process of institutionalization that lasted until 1929. From then on, but especially after World-War II, the Mexican government has consistently emphasized economic growth as the basis for development. Unfortunately, while its economic growth has translated into positive increases in the GNP, social development has lagged behind, and continues to do so. The protectionist model of the 1940-80 period proved not to be sustainable when Mexico went into an economic crisis during 'the lost decade' of the 80s. It was not until the second half of the 80s that a group of technocrats began to redirect the integration of Mexico into the global economy.

For the last ten years, the Mexican government has adopted a so-called neoliberal economic policy. Since then, the national plan has been mainly directed towards the reduction of traditional paternalism by the state in development and social expenditure, and towards privatization. The national program that most embraced this ideology, Solidaridad, was also the political base of the controversial 1988-94 presidential period. The program basically proposed an agreement between the state and society to jointly tackle the problems of all Mexicans. The plan intended to shift the government's role vis-à-vis civil society. For the beneficiaries, mainly the poorest strata of the population, Solidaridad meant they could finally actively participate in the improvement of their living conditions. Contributing with their labor, millions of Mexicans jointly worked for the substantial betterment of their communities, which commonly involved the provision of infrastructure.

Chalco was one of the targeted communities that received the most attention and measurable benefits from Solidaridad. It was unexpectedly discovered in the field that this program had a strong impact on the CAP of migrants. Admittedly, a comprehensive appraisal of Solidaridad is beyond the scope of this study; however, the implications of this development program for the socio-cultural transformations of the community should

not be overlooked. Evidently, the program has been successful in incorporating migrants' labor with the traditional responsibility of the government to provide infrastructure to the growing urban population. But it is also true that quantifiable 'progress' is not necessarily consistent with an overall improvement in the migrants' quality of life. The numerical achievements claimed by the promoters of Solidaridad have not had the expected effects yet. Public schools are not being attended, infrastructure has not been totally used, and Chalco is not a consolidated community yet. Isolation and apathy, more than cohesion, in terms of political participation for development, are more a pattern. Moreover, criticism of Solidaridad in Chalco includes its incompatibility with the traditional systems of migrants. In this regard, this thesis' field data reinforces findings of scholars who have outlined the deficiencies of Solidaridad (Cornelius et al. 1994, Hiernaux 1995, Russell 1994).

Cornelius, for instance, has addressed the major ideological inconsistency of Solidaridad. In accordance to ancestral traditions, the projects of Solidaridad focused on "collective, solidary action through which individuals may benefit by cooperative effort" (Cornelius *et al.* 1994, 15). By definition, the program emphasized communal organization as necessary to improve infrastructure and housing in the settlement. However, this approach is, as Cornelius described it, "a marked departure from the individualized agency that pervades the free-market model" (ibid.). Such contradiction came out while analyzing the culture of Chalco. Urban systems such as education and work, founded on a *laissez-faire* doctrine of competitiveness, are gradually deteriorating the traditional sense of community of villagers. One of the consequences is that little participation can be expected from Chalco residents to build their neighborhood. Despite the intentions of Solidaridad the community has not been able to develop a true sense of mutual aid and organization (Hiernaux 1995, 12).

After several years of urban experience, migrants have realized that individual enterprise is the most viable approach to succeed in their integration into urban society. The informants attribute the social disintegration of their community to a sudden change in

their livelihood: from the communal work-ethics of peasants to the countless individual initiatives (mostly informal) to make a living in Chalco. After conducting several studies in the field, Hiernaux concludes that the community of Chalco is "fragmented by individualistic attitudes of people and reduced interaction among neighbors" (Hiernaux 1994, 12). Don Luis, one of the informants in this research, has been forced to transform his traditional notion of mutual aid, as he rented his labor to his close neighbor and *compadre*.[2] Being *compadres* in the city contradicts what the relationship traditionally means in the (Latin American) countryside: a "culturally enshrined bond of mutual obligation that establishes close friendships among equals" (Lewellen 1995, 137). Migrants are forced to adapt to dominant urban ideology in both material and behavioral ways.

Having presented macrostructural influences of the CAP, let us now attempt an answer to the question which has been intentionally insinuated in this analysis: Is the CAP ever completed?

On the most optimistic side of things, looking exclusively at migrants' material fulfillment, it could be said that adaptation seems to be eventually achieved. Despite the fact that this process takes time, the community of Chalco is on the right path to consolidate its physical environment. In this regard, migrants have been solving their housing problem, especially since the economic boom of the late 80s, as discussed above (although not as much in the aftermath of the most recent crisis). During the period of bonanza, it was generally agreed upon that the Mexican economy showed positive signs such as a high GNP growth, a positive balance of trade, an appreciating currency, foreign capital flows, relative employment generation, high levels of consumption, etc. These kind of macro-indicators give an idea of economic development, but they actually say very little about the quality of people's lives. If, on the other hand, we evaluate adaptation as the integration of migrants into the structures of society that define their culture, then

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[2]The social relationship that assigns Don Lorenzo and his neighbor such a title is most probably that of Godfather to another's child.

adaptation has not been achieved yet. For the majority in Chalco, upward mobility displayed by their material possessions, including housing, represents only a symbolic intention of 'belonging' to the urban society. However, marginalization prevails because migrants in Chalco are excluded from the socio-economic and political structures that define their cultural change.

At this point, it is worth recognizing that further generalizations seem problematic because variations of marginalization are encountered in every specific place and time. However, as Mexico is going through a rapid and promising democratization process, one can speculate on the relationship between the CAP (in its broader sense of integration and development of marginalized masses) and changes in national political economy.[3] It might be possible that some characteristics of the culture of Chalco are repeated in other national contexts in the Third World, where similar structural conditions prevail.

The modernization of Mexico as a means of attaining competitive status in the world-economy has proven successful in terms of economic growth. The influential presence of multinational companies and capital has been overwhelming and is reflected in the positive increases in 'traditional' indicators of progress. However, consistent with post-revolutionary patterns in Mexico, economic growth has not reduced the immense polarity in the society. The aspiration of all sectors to benefit equally and indiscriminately from economic growth remains unfulfilled. After almost two centuries of national independence, the Mexican political-economy is still incompetent in counterbalancing the social effects of the global economy. As a result, modernization of the country has been advantageous for very few, somewhat helpful for many, yet no doubt detrimental for the majority. Still, this critique of Mexican economic policies would not be fair without recognizing that the challenge has not been small.

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[3]To this review, it is worth adding the recent electoral overturns in which the PRI has transfered to the opposition power over jurisdictions all over the country. To mention just the most important result, on July 6, 1997, for the first time in revolutionary history, the electorate granted the PRD's candidate legitimacy to govern Mexico's Federal District.

Making economic development translate into a more egalitarian society seems to be a crusade-like endeavor but, on the positive side, Mexico is moving towards a period of political transformations (as it will be commented in the epilogue). In view of such historical changes, this study hopes that the scope of housing problems and solutions will be broadened by housing experts, policy makers, and politicians. As a humble contribution to this endeavor, the present thesis would like to initiate a reconsideration of two main components of the phenomenon of migrant housing: tradition and modernity. Out of their combination, the aim is to propose a tentative course of action for anyone interested in improving the quality of life for the poor and the marginalized.

To start with, it should be recognized that Chalco, as much as any informal settlement on the periphery of Mexico City, is settled by peoples with diverse sets of values. When they migrate, new urban dwellers bring with themselves, in addition to their labor power, traditional views, creativity, resourcefulness, and other capabilities which have the potential to provide them a better quality of life. For this reason, the rough diamond of traditional knowledge should be incorporated into modern development initiatives. Theoretically, this is supposed to have begun since the 70s, but unfortunately, the archaic notion that tradition retards development is still held by some hard-line advocates of modernization. It is necessary to emphasize that traditional knowledge should not be automatically dismissed by a facile imposition of scientific understanding. This would be equivalent to denying that traditional knowledge prevents on a daily basis the starvation of a considerable proportion of the world population. Some scholars have recently begun exploring the social mechanisms that urban popular sectors use daily to cope with low wages and very little state support.[4] As well, traditional knowledge is also used by informal entrepreneurs who subsidize whole national economies. For example, street vendors provide low-cost goods to formal-sector workers, thus reducing their need for higher wages (Portes 1978). Let us not forget that with this precious help the economic modernization of Mexico has been able to confront its permanent crisis.

[4]Escobar and González (1995) provide statistical evidence of cases throughout Latin America.

Second, in addition to the above described disregard towards traditions, no less relevant is the fact that traditional knowledge is being undermined in the metropolis by modernization forces. This is primarily due to the new contact peasants have with alien systems, such as socio-economic and socio-political institutions prevailing in Mexico City. There is a consensus among the informants of this thesis that some urban systems are inappropriate to and incompatible with their world views. Remarkably, the most outstanding constant in their opinions is the distinction between the community values of villagers and the individualist world-view of the urbanite. It could even be said that, through the impact of the dominant culture that isolates them, migrants experience a loss of cultural identity. Moreover, capabilities and values of traditional peoples are also deteriorated by development interventions of which they are often objects. The paternalistic methods of Solidaridad were partly responsible for the disruption of migrants' autonomy; the program was far more revolutionary in promoting social participation than political organization. The weakening of migrants' self-determination (i.e., their ability to decide their own lives, practice their own culture and assimilate at their own rate) is best reflected in a decline of their productive capacity. Most migrants invest their energy in acquiring, accumulating and manipulating the already-existent symbols that are perceived as means to gain access to urban society.

It is precisely because of such social pressure to enter the race of individual upward mobility, that solidary participation of local people should not be taken for granted. The advocates of self-help housing, for instance, should reconsider the romanticized notion that people's participation is a constant. In the 60s, it seemed a good idea to tackle the housing shortage by counting on communal help in squatter settlements, like Manging and Turner visualized. But in the present reality of the Third World, in which top-down development puts forward a neoliberal ideology, communal ties can continue to deteriorate. If the development process is not re-formulated at the grass-roots level, probably people like Graciela will no longer offer "*solo una comidita*" (simply a dinner) to her neighbors who '*le echaron la mano*' (offered her support) to build her house; most likely she will have to pay for help. Even relying on such isolated cases of exceptional

persistence, like Doña Graciela's, traditional systems of knowledge and cooperation may continue to disappear. However, this may not necessarily happen if inherent human potentials such as solidarity and cooperativeness are revived through professionals' direct involvement, which is more pluralistic in every sense and even considers people's participation in political decisions.

Finally, the collaborative venture that will be suggested relies on the best combination of these two attracting poles of the culture of Chalco: modernity and tradition. Scientific and traditional knowledge should be complementary in the effort to bring about a real improvement in the migrants' quality of life. To start with, better results could be obtained if group solidarity and cultural identity were renewed, two human resources that in Chalco obviously exist, though they are in a weakened state.[5] These vital forces, encouraged through direct participation with the community, are prime sources of motivation which aim to inspire people to confront their own problems, identify solutions, and participate in carrying them out (Kleymeyer 1994, 4). Culture, communal aspirations and non-party political formations are becoming the basic elements for the agendas of those communities which are defining development at the grass-roots level. For many reasons this endeavor needs the support of activists and 'deprofessionalized intellectuals' (Escobar 1992, 425). People from all backgrounds are starting to be interested in communities like Chalco by getting involved with people in innumerable actions such as economic projects or housing programs, and offering people support in their attempts to renew politics at the local level, but with a global vision. A proliferation of national and international CDIs (Community-based Development Initiatives) can serve as a support to the national economic plan.

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[5]In order to revitalize this element necessary for development, one option is suggested: to foster people's cultural expression, "the representation in language, symbols, and actions of a particular group's collective heritage" (Kleymeyer 1994, 3-4). Several professionals working in urban development at the local level have supported people by organizing artistic activities in urban communities of the Third World. Artistic representations such as theater performance, poetry, dance, story-telling and so on, contribute to reinforce and enhance the traditions and values of people.

As for the physical environment, the task that architects and planners face (the ones who feel themselves ready to intervene) is to pursue harmony between modernity and the almost unexplored traditional sphere. It is necessary, on the one hand, that the search for new technologies continues in order to contribute to solving the housing shortage. On the other hand, it is also important that professionals respect the cultural requirements of residents. In Chalco, it would be beneficial for everyone to successfully identify the cultural components of migrant housing. For the economy, a diversification of materials and techniques in the markets could be a positive start for the expansion of mid-size industry. Such heterogeneity would represent more choices for migrants in building the kind of living spaces which reinforces their unique cultural identity, as members of a pluralistic society. And for the urban environment, diversification of building products would expand opportunities for a more genuine reproduction of architecture as a local expression, a realm vulnerable to the homogenizing force of the dominant Western culture. Nevertheless, beyond aesthetic preoccupations, it is crucial to bear in mind that in Chalco it is not architecture but the "architects" themselves who need our attention more readily.

Epilogue

The main concern raised by the present analysis is the social implication of what some scholars have recently declared to be the main deficiency of the global economy. Both followers of dependency and world-system theories have warned us about the possibilities for large parts of the world population to become "unimportant, unexploited and unexploitable" for the rest of the society (Castells 1993, 37). Today, such an alarming phenomenon does not only exist in academic projections, it is happening in reality, and has been the basis for the political agenda of excluded groups such as the Zapatista Army in Mexico. The claims of the Zapatistas, like those of other revolutionary movements, have attracted international attention for their legitimate content. Among other things, such voices of dissent remind us that marginals are not only the ones who remain in oblivion in the countryside, as it could be first thought. They are as well rural migrants in the outskirts of cities who, since they continue to be relegated to urban marginality, are unable to complete their CAP.

Chalco has repeated the pattern of many squatter settlements in the Third World, at least of those which have reached physical consolidation. The community, thanks to the ephemeral 'Mexican miracle', was capable of sustaining an 'apparent' integration into the urban society. The squatter settlement now looks more 'urban', as compared to the early village-like settlement of shacks that it once was. But housing improvement is only one component of human development; by no means should migrants be categorized as veritable urbanites based only on their living conditions; much more is needed. In order to achieve real urban development, an additional element is missing: that which migrants do themselves to improve every aspect of their quality of life after, or without, any external intervention. Julius Nyerere suggests that a self-determination approach could serve to make people aware that we are capable of providing our own development by making our own decisions. We can do this ourselves by increasing our understanding of what we are doing and why; by increasing our own knowledge and ability; and, by encouraging our own full participation as equals in the life of the community we live in (Shuman 1994, 12). As for Chalco, much of this seems feasible because this community is rich in almost

every sense of the word, except for income. However, it was corroborated in the field that the necessary accumulation of material symbols was realized at the expense of long-term mechanisms for eventual integration, such as health, education and especially political participation.

On the road to 'visible' development, material accumulation seemed to be, by and large, prioritized right after survival. It would not be difficult to find in Chalco many cases of men and women who prefer to make a living starting at a young age, working extended hours and with little quality of working conditions, so that they can count on more resources to buy their urbanity in Mexico City. Of lower priority were education or an enhancement of consumption habits (as in a more balanced nutrition, for instance). One cannot help questioning to what extent having good facilities and infrastructure are necessary, if education and health are becoming 'luxuries', accessible only to the privileged ones. "An increase in the number of school buildings is development only if those buildings can be, and are being, used to develop the minds and understanding of people" (Nyerere, quoted in Shuman 1994, 12). In Chalco, development will continue to be meaningless until migrants themselves understand their role in society, specifically in the present context of Mexico. At the same time, gender and age-related issues should be addressed also by themselves, in order to enhance collective empowerment. Mexicans have traditionally proven themselves capable of reviving their power of unity, especially in periods of crisis; this lends hope to the prospects for change.

This thesis documented some of the first social effects of the so-called Mexican miracle, but more changes are happening rapidly. Following the famous *error de diciembre* in 1994,[6] the situation has worsened for civil society. Mexico is going through uncertain times: the current model of economic and social development cannot generate the minimum benefits for the majority of Mexicans. As a consequence, their buying power

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[6] The error, the initial economic strategies of president Ernesto Zedillo, is to some the main cause for what has been described as the deepest depression of modern Mexico. In an unusual breach of the rule of Mexico's patrilineal transmission of power, former president, Carlos Salinas, openly blamed Zedillo for the crisis.

decreases and their misery increases daily. The governing capability of institutions continues to be jeopardized. Despite this situation, the same political structure remains in place, the one that explicitly relies on the belief that people are market entities rather than a dynamic force searching for a more just future. But recently, the past two and a half years of downward mobility experienced by Mexican society has shown a positive side. The economic crisis is paralleling the political crisis of the Mexico's traditional authoritarian system. The democratic structure, which in Mexico is defined within the model of the one-party state, can no longer avoid political change.

Public consciousness of these matters is awakening more than ever. People are starting to question the validity of the implementation of free market policies without a social component. And, relying on their own powers, some sectors of society are starting to mobilize, representing significant pressure for the state. Hopefully this pressure will be transformed into democratic and peaceful changes, leading towards a more pluralistic society. In this time of transformation, the Mexican government can no longer escape the fact that its power, gained through traditional forms of clientelism and authoritarianism, is eroding (see Chapter Three). From this time forward, politics should put in practice new forms of democracy that includes all sectors of civil society, particularly the marginalized majority. Inclusion has to be the prerequisite for a new design of political structures in Mexico as in elsewhere. This way of doing would be characterized by a more direct and independent style of participation, a condition that is now more urgent than ever.

Hopefully in Mexico, as in many parts of the Third World, the political conditions to correct structural deficiencies are becoming more favorable. This is the time to re-define social progress, to design the type of modernization that recognizes people in the margins, and to heed their input as well. Let us remember that it is them, the least heard, who still hold much of the knowledge needed to model the new kind of social progress that we all need, but have yet to attain. Peasants in the cities could share, as they do among themselves, a thousands tricks they have at their disposal to reformulate and re-direct modern technology and institutions in order to provide prosperity. But more importantly,

those millions of common men and women could show us alternative ways out of the declining era of the 'economic man'.

As Carlos Fuentes hopes in his essay "A New Time for Mexico:"

> The repertory of our urban insufficiencies, of our own version of Western culture, awaits us silently in the Indian world which has become the secret repository of all that we have forgotten and disdained: ritual intensity, mythic imagination, caring for nature, the relation with death, communal ties, the capacity for self-government . . .
>
> (Fuentes 1996, 202).

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Appendix

A. Informal Questionnaire

1. General Information

1.1 What's your name?

1.2 How old are you?

1.3 How long have you lived in Mexico City?

1.4 Where are you from originally?

1.5 Where in Oaxaca?

1.6 How big is ______(village of origin)?

1.7 What language is spoken there?

1.8 Where did you learn to speak Spanish?

1.9 What did you do in ______(village of origin)?

1.10 What was your house like in____________ (village of origin)?

1.11 What made you decide to come to Mexico City?

1.12 How many children do you have?

1.13 How old are they?

1.14 What do they do?

1.15 What about your wife, what does she do?

1.16 Does everyone live in this house?

1.17 Tell me, what did you do for a living when you first came to Mexico City?

1.18 And then, what happened to that job?

1.19 And now, what do you do?

1.20 What do you do in your spare time?

1.21 When you have a *fiesta* in your house (such as a wedding or baptism), who do you invite?, are they people from your home town?

1.22 What are the differences between living in Oaxaca and living in Mexico City?

2 The Houses

2.1 Was this the first house you lived in when you arrived in_____(year of arrival)?

2.2 Then, how long have you lived in this house?

2.3 When did you get this plot?

2.4 Did you buy it?

2.5 Was there anything already built when you first occupied the plot? (if not go to 2.8)

2.6 And you used that room as a......?

2.7 What did you build first?

2.8 When was that?

2.9 Oh, I see that was when ________(one of the members of the family who was born in the same period) was born, and when you were working as a ________(current job)?

2.10 But tell me something, working as a _________(current job) in that time, could you save the money to build your house?

2.11 And, who helped you in the construction, in that period?

2.12 Is there any room or element that you decided to include in this house, which you did not have in Oaxaca?

2.13 Is there anything that you used in Oaxaca, that you excluded in Mexico?

2.14 In that time (the first stage) did you have the kitchen and the bathroom in the exterior, as you had it in Oaxaca?

2.15 Did you consider a problem walking outside in order to get to the bathroom and kitchen?

2.16 When did you build the kitchen, then (as it is now)?

2.17 And the bathroom (as it is now)?

2.18 Why did you decide to include kitchen and bathroom into the house (if that is the case)?

2.19 Tell me more about how the family grew and the house with it. How you added rooms through time, from that first one you told me about to the latest?

2.20 Which is the room you like the most?

3. Materials

3.1 When you decided to build your house did you think of doing it with the same materials that houses are made of in Oaxaca?

3.2 Why did you decide to build with_______and________? (apparent building materials)

3.3 Wouldn't it have been better if you had built with ______, as you did in Oaxaca?

3.4 The first structure of this house projected a second floor for the future, what I mean is if columns, for example, were reinforced thinking of a future vertical addition?

3.5 What is (or going to be) this second floor for?

3.6 Tell me now about your garden, is there any particular reason why you decided to leave this small garden in this area?

3.7 What is the most expensive item for building a new house in the city?

3.8 I believe that is why you decided for ____(iron) instead of ________(aluminum) for your windows? (or any other similar suggestion)

3.9 In the case of your garage door, why did you decide for such size and material?

3.11 What about the balcony? (if there is not a balcony I will refer to any other ornament in the facade)

3.12 When was it built?

3.13 Which room has access to the balcony?

3.14 How often do you use your balcony?

3.15 (If there is no balcony) what does this element mean for you?

3.16 Are there houses nearby which have such an ornament?

3.17 What kind of finishing do you prefer for the walls?

3.18 For ceilings?

3.19 And for the floor?

3.20 Is stucco cheaper than tiles in the walls?

3.21 Why do you think roofs are sloped in rural areas, while in the city they are all flat?

3.22 How come this roof is (is not) sloped?

3.23 Are you actually doing changes in the house?

3.24 What future plans do you have for your house?

financial situation

3.25 Has your financial situation improved, compared with the one you had when you arrived in the city?

3.26 In your case how has the crisis affected your salary?

3.27 How much money do you earn?

3.28 Do your wife or your children contribute with their income, so that it can be invested in your house?

3.29 Can you tell me how you distribute your income?

3.30 What percentage of the wage is invested in the construction of the house?

4. Opinion About Other Neighbors' Houses

4.1 I have walked around and I have seen that houses are very diverse in the neighborhood. I'd like to know your opinion about such diversity.

For instance, which is the best house, according to you, in the neighborhood?

4.2 Would you like to have a house like that?

4.3 Which is the one you like the least?

4.4 How often do you visit your neighbors?

4.5 When you have guests where do you receive them?

4.6 Don't you mind your guests entering every room in your house?

4.7 What do they say about your house?

4.8 Are you proud of your house?

4.9 Is it easy to identify the wealthiest person in the community, from the street?

4.10 How so?

4.11 Can you also identify, just by looking, the place of origin of your neighbors?

4.12 What is the province of origin of your close neighbors?

4.13 What is a house inhabited by people from the province of ______, like, for example?

4.14 What is a house inhabited by people from here (Mexico City) like?

4.15 Would you prefer to live in another neighborhood rather than in this one?

4.16 In which one? Please describe it.

4.17 Do you think this neighborhood (El Valle de Chalco) could be like ________(the desired neighborhood) one day?

4.18 Would you like it to be so?

4.19 Do you believe this particular house is appropriate for you who have improved your situation throughout all these years? do you think you should aim at something better?

4.20 What kind of house? Please describe it.

4.21 What do you hope for your future life in the city?

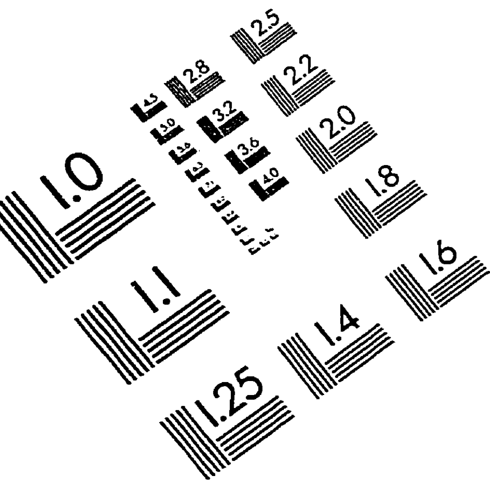
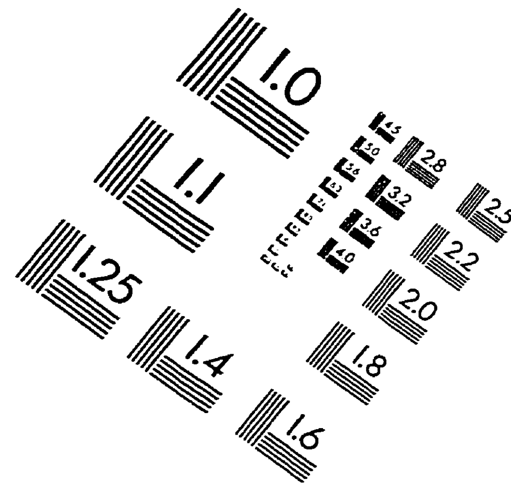
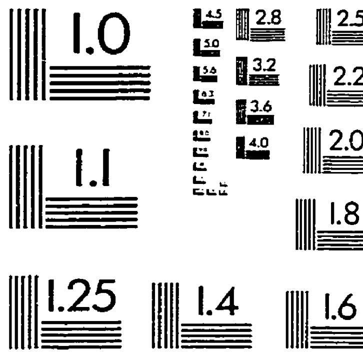
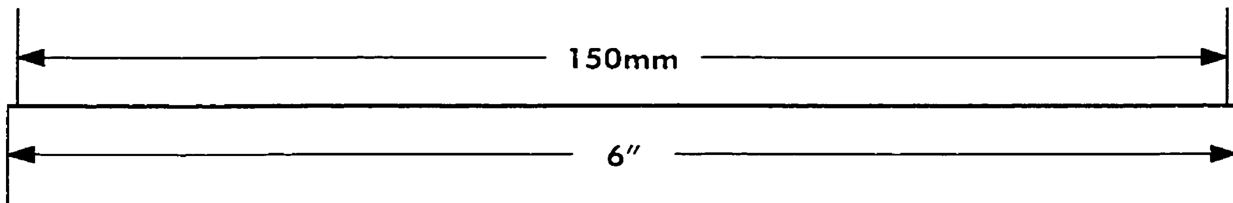
4.22 As for your house or your personal acquisitions…

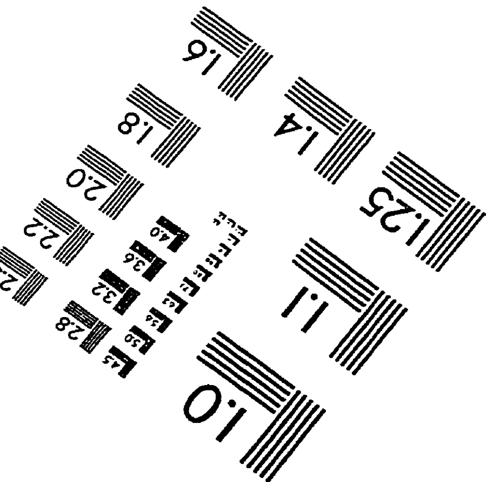
B. Informants' Profile

No. of informant	Name	Age	No. of household members	Years in Mexico City	Years in Chalco	Occupation in Oaxaca	Occupation in Mexico City	Mother Tongue
1	Doña Monica	55	5	38	14	Farmer	Maid	Zapoteco
2	Don Pedro	43	4	28	15	Farmer	Government service	Spanish
3	Don Plutarco	41	4	19	10	Farmer	Grocer	Spanish
4	Doña Graciela	34	5	20	15	Other	Maid	Spanish
5	Doña Lilia	38	2	21	12	Farmer	Garbage collector (husband)	Spanish
6	Don Luis Gomez	49	4	26	7	Farmer	Garbage collector	Zapoteco
7	Don Joel Zaragoza	35	4	17	2	Farmer	Salesman	Spanish
8	Don Danilo	50	8	25	17	Farmer	Government service	Mazateco
9	Don Bernabe Castillo	56	5	32	15	Farmer	Retired soldier	Spanish
10	Don Liborio Dominguez	53	6	20	17	Farmer	Garbage collector	Spanish
11	Don Filemon Robles	37	7	20	14	Farmer	Grocer (owns shop)	Spanish
12	Don Javier Rodriguez	48	7	30	15	Farmer	Grocer (owns shop)	Spanish
13	Doña Consuelo Fernandez	34	5	17	14	Other	Private service	Zapoteco

Table 1. Informants' Profile

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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