Troubled grounds:
small-scale organic coffee production in Oaxaca, Mexico.

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Abstract

The global coffee industry is in a state of crisis. Small-scale producers are those most seriously impacted by the crisis, facing the challenges of a precarious and changing market, despite limited resources. In Oaxaca, Mexico, a prominent response among indigenous small-scale farmers has been to join independent coffee producer unions. Within theses unions there is currently a move to encourage organic coffee cultivation among campesinos, so that these groups might niche market their coffee. This niche, or "conscience", market is shaped by the "organic coffee discourse" which emphasizes the themes of environmental protection, social justice and indigenity. By examining the relationship between organic coffee production (as an economic strategy for marginal producers) and its discourse (which mobilizes consumers in wealthy countries) we will see the impetus behind organic coffee production as it ranges from Oaxaca's indigenous farmers, their producer unions, and consumers.

Résumé

L'industrie mondiale du café est dans un état de crise. Les petits producteurs sont ceux qui sont les plus sérieusement touchés par la crise, faisant face aux aléas d'un marché précaire et changeant, malgré leurs ressources limitées. À Oaxaca, au Mexique, la réponse envisagée par les petits fermiers indigènes a été de joindre les unions de producteurs indépendants de café. À l'intérieur de ces unions, il y a présentement un movement qui encourage la culture du café organique parmi les campesinos pour que ceux-ci puissent cibler un marché spécifique du café. Ce marché "conscient" est formé à partir du discours sur le café organique qui met l'emphase sur les thèmes de la protection environnementale, la justice sociale et l'indigénuité. En examinant la relation entre la production de café organique (comme une stratégie économique pour les producteurs marginaux) et ces discours (qui mobilisent les consommateurs des pays mieux nantis) nous allons constater la tendance derrière la production de café organique qui s'étend des petits fermiers indigènes aux consommateurs en passant par les unions de producteurs indépendants.

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Table of Contents

Preface: Rumors and Relationships – Oaxaca's Organic Coffee Industry

The knowledge I'm interested in is not something you can buy
and then have and can be comfortable with.
The knowledge I'm interested in keeps opening wider and wider,
making me smaller and more amazed,
until I see I cannot have it all –
and then delight in that as freedom
- Heather McHugh, poet

There were many days during my field research in Oaxaca, Mexico, when I was watching people go about their business, and sometimes distracting them from it with my questions and search for discussion. But one of these days stands out in particular. Something was different. The air was charged and people seemed preoccupied at CEPCO, Oaxaca's largest coffee producer union. But this was not the energy that comes with campesinos from all over the state gathering to seek new ways to manage the international coffee crisis. A young woman next to me eventually explained. There were rumors that some coffee farmers had mislabeled their harvests – indicating that they were certified organic, when in fact they were not.

Uncertified coffee, either from farmers who produce both types, or that of uncertified neighbors, could in theory at least, be combined with legitimately organic coffee so that there might be an additional gain from the price difference that the little label signifies. Clearly, this is not a situation that certifiers or processors would appreciate! However, whether or not this ruse ever took place – the possibility that it could have, or might yet, raises several issues.

Firstly, a "trick" of this kind unsettled my sense that organic coffee is produced due to an environmental and/or social ethic. I realized how much I had assumed that the

introduction of "cold economics" was unwelcome at a place like CEPCO. It reveals a line of (dis)connection between the discourse of organic coffee production and its material context. Furthermore, I became aware that organic coffee producers might have a more ambivalent relationship to their producer union and certifiers than simply being "happy suppliers". The boundary between the organizations that support small-scale farmers and the farmers themselves became more complicated for me.

Finally, I had a sense that on some symbolic level the rumor was potent (upsetting or amusing perhaps depending on ones' position). The administration may be worried about the implications of such a scandal, but a few of the campesinos thought the whole story was highly entertaining. Just the *possibility* of such an act somehow muddles the motives and incentives behind the production of organic coffee, as a North American consumer like myself perceives it.

What strikes me as significant here is that, real or imagined, this event unsettles so many assumptions. This thesis will take particular interest in the relationships and dynamics between a community in Oaxaca's Sierra Norte, and CEPCO, the union they are affiliated with. It will not to solve the question of whether organic farmers might (want to) pull the wool over our eyes from time to time. But by examining the connections (and disconnections) between organic coffee consumers in wealthy countries, a Oaxacan producer union, and its marginal indigenous producers, it will become clear as to why I reacted at first with surprise and concern, while the farmers could walk away laughing and shaking their heads.

Introduction: The Desired Drink

O Coffee! Thou dost dispel all care, thou art the object of desire to the scholar.
This is the beverage of the friends of God.
- "In Praise of Coffee", Arabic Poem (1511)

The situation just described in the preface highlights a spectrum of issues that have become the core of this thesis. It raises questions about who desires the production of organic coffee, and why, and how this desire operates within a local context, a globalizing system of trade, and a symbolic order.

As North American consumers, we are in a position to acquire goods and services from all around the world. The current system of trade ensures that the objects of capitalist desire – be they clothing, food, music, almost anything really - can be sold and purchased in a global market. This context must have some qualitative significance for the relationships between various nation-states, local and transnational businesses, and even between producers and consumers.

The experience of global trade is not necessarily a new one (see Friedman, 2001). One can trace coffee's extensive, worldwide commercial relationships throughout the colonial era (Pendergrast, 1999: 3-44). Yet contemporary theorists of many disciplines are exploring the notion of "globalization" as a concept, and as a socio-economic phenomena. This concern with our global interconnectedness speaks of a new set of relationships and processes that require elucidation. Consider, again, the classic colonial trade relationship. A colonial power dominates another territory and extracts primary resources in order to fuel the industrialization of the "Mother Country". The colonized remain a captive market for purchasing the products of their colonizer's industry.

Although clearly more complex and dynamic that this scenario, it is essentially a bilateral relationship.

Today, there is a predominance of what McMichael has called a "global commodity chain" (2000: 86, 349) whereby commodities are moved all over the planet in order to complete various stages of a single production process (see Appendix I for examples of the "conventional" and "fair trade organic" coffee commodity chains). In order to explore the dynamics of this rather elaborate chain we require not only a sense of local production and global context. We also need an appreciation of the uniquely symbolic and discursive power of commodities. However before we can explore this more fully, let us return to the concept of globalization in order to define our framework.

There has been much discussion both within and outside anthropology regarding the condition of "globalization". The term is greatly contested and has been applied widely to describe everything from late capitalism to contemporary social life (see for example Friedman, 2001 and Appadurai, 1996). At this point, however, let us set parameters around this term so that it might reveal something as to the complex relationships between states, industry and producers/consumers. Drawing from Michael Kearney's (1995: 548-553) excellent treatment of the term, we could propose the following working definition for globalization. It is a process whereby:

- capital is able the move ever more quickly around the planet, and there is increasing global economic interdependence,
- virtually immediate communication worldwide is possible and media is accessible internationally,
- the growth in world tourism and transnational migration is sustained,

- World political systems, trans-statal trade agreements, and international social movements are established.

These elements will be assumed to shape our relationships with commodities, both as the consumers who seek them and the laborers who produce them. What is necessary then, is to integrate this understanding of globalization with what we will describe as the symbolic value of commodities, in the context of the Mexican coffee industry.

Globalization and Mexico's Coffee Industry: A Sketch

Coffee farming in Southern Mexico is a prominent industry. Ninety percent of Mexico's exported coffee is grown in the southern states, and coffee is second only to petroleum as a revenue-generating exported commodity[1]. In practice, this means that 4,000 communities are involved in coffee production; it is evident that for the 276,000 producers and their families, the crop plays an important role in rural Mexico (Mace, 1998: 7).

Bill Mace has argued that the interdependency of global economies and Mexico's entrance into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 have resulted in significant changes for country, including the advancement of neo-liberal reforms and increasing privatization of former state institutions (Mace, 1998: 2). However, the signing of NAFTA did not signal an overnight transition. Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986, and this encouraged the neo-liberalization of Mexican agriculture when the country was already in a time of economic crisis.

[1] Costatini, Peter (1998) "Bitter Harvest" www.msnbc.com/news/168593.asp?cp1=1.

The Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFE) was dismantled by 1989 and this essentially signaled the State's withdrawal from the coffee industry. Various stages of the coffee commodity chain, including purchasing, financing, and marketing, that were once managed by the state-controlled Institute, would have to be handled by independent producer unions or the private sector (Porter, 2000: 123). The struggle for control over these stages began.

We must add to this context the simultaneous dropping of the price for coffee on the world market after the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in 1989. The ICA had previously worked to stabilize coffee prices by restricting the supply via export quotas. However, in a political climate that encouraged free trade policies, it is not so surprising that a new agreement between the world's most prominent coffee producing and consuming countries failed to be met. As previously restricted coffee flooded the global market and the exchange value fell, Mexican farmers were in a vulnerable position.

From these events, we can begin to see how larger forces shape the practice of small-scale coffee farming in rural Mexico. By the early 1990s, many small-scale producers found themselves operating in the global market without government support, at the same time as the costs of production were rising and the prices for their crops were plummeting (Porter, 2000: 122). Given this, it is clear that many farmers would require some other means to ameliorate their situation, or they would be forced to give up production – an occurrence that was, in fact, also taking place. But for others, the solution was to be found elsewhere. Many producers responded to their abandonment by joining coffee-growing associations (Mace, 1998: 3).

We must be careful not to conceptualize globalization as some bulldozer of cultural homogenization and western capitalism. This is not to say that the above conditions and consequences ought to be treated lightly, as surely the changes were devastating for many. Yet we would do well to keep in mind that people are resourceful. We will see how the same forces that have encouraged free trade agreements and agricultural neo-liberalization (which have clearly disadvantaged small-scale coffee farmers in Mexico) have also provided the opportunities for international networking and productive solidarity.

What is Organic?

It seems appropriate to define what precisely is meant by the term "organic" here. For some, the term indicates a misnomer – isn't all coffee organic in the strictest sense? Others outright scorn the word as a demonstration of the gullibility of the trendy consumer – for them coffee is coffee, regardless of the label. For yet others, the "organic" label translates as simply too expensive a product. However, some (as consumers become increasingly aware of the complex manipulation of our most basic foodstuffs) argue that the "organic" label signifies a rejection of chemically sustained agribusiness, in favor of more direct and environmentally sustainable trade relationships between farmers and consumers.

Mexico is currently the world's largest producer of organic coffee (Costatini, 1998). There are many possible reasons that producers would have their lands certified as organic. They range from:

- the reduction of costs, by not using pesticides and chemical fertilizers,
- the ecological and/or health advantages of organic farming,

- the potentially higher prices earned for organic products,
- or, perhaps, the fiscal security of niche marketing an organic product.

One strategy to deal with market instabilities and the devaluation of prices for coffee has been to expand a "conscience market" (whereby consumers are encouraged to use their purchasing power in order to support fair wages and working conditions, environmental protection and just economic development).

This "conscience market" would, for example, embrace what are known as "fair trade" and "organic" farming practices. There is much research being done into the fairness of fair trade, and its implications (see for example, Fridell, 2003, Suri, 2002, Tiffen and Zadek 1998). However, we will concentrate on what is known as "organic" coffee production. This is a functional distinction more than anything.

In order for a product to be certified as organic, land and farming practices undergo a series of rigorous investigations and evaluations on a regular basis (see Appendix II for the international criteria of organic certification). For our purposes then, the idea of "organic coffee" will imply the successful engagement with this certification process. In this way we will be able to distinguish farmers who simply do not use pesticides or chemical fertilizers from those who have been officially certified by an outside body.

The designation of organic certification earns coffee a prominent place in the conscience market. But this market is only significant to the extent that it can entice the moral sympathies of consumers. How might coffee, as a commodity, command a symbolic power great enough to appeal to our consciences and open our wallets?

The Symbolic Economy

The various possible reactions to the word organic imply a certain (if contested) value of the term. Why pay more for coffee that has organic certification? Why desire this? In his work "Culture and Practical Reason" (1976) Marshall Sahlins argues that there is a "...symbolic logic which organizes demand. The social value of steak or roast, as compared with tripe or tongue, is what underlies the difference in economic value" (1976: 176). What is being sought here is a "cultural account of production" whereby "the social meaning of an object that makes it useful to a certain category of persons is no more apparent from its physical properties than is the value it may be assigned in exchange" (Sahlins, 1976: 169).

This perspective reminds us that capitalism too has a cultural order. We can now imagine that the act of purchasing organic coffee is not simply one of sheer economic rationality. There is a *symbolic* economy at work also, and this can be expected to shape the nature of globalizing trade. Organic coffee commands a symbolic value that distinguishes it from the standard product. And according to Sahlins, this value is symbolic because it operates beyond plain use-value, in a realm of social worth. It says something about one's political intentions as a consumer ("I encourage environmentally sustainable agriculture"), about one's sense of economic responsibility ("I believe coffee farmers are entitled to a fair price"), and about one's ethical orientation ("I will pay more for a product in order to be a responsible consumer").

If the act of certification endows coffee with symbolic value, how does this affect what we generally consider to be strictly economic relationships? Symbolic value becomes the force behind the emergence and success of the conscience market. Recall the

preface and the possible scandal outlined therein. Somehow, the thought that the symbolic act of buying organic coffee might be emptied – by virtue of consumers having been "tricked" - is unsettling. The anticipated exchange of dollars for a certain kind of product, with a special kind of value, is destabilized in the face of feasible deceit.

What is upsetting here is not the trick itself so much as the challenge it presents to the symbolic clarity of the labeled product. It threatens the implicit terms of trade in the conscience market, it signals the reneging on an unspoken deal. Consumers might imagine themselves plunged back into cold, capitalist, (and hence amoral?) relations, frustrating the search for something else. A dialectic sparks between desire and expectation, morality and (consumer) power, between symbolic and economic life.

When this research was originally conceived, I was concerned with why indigenous small-scale farmers in Mexico would, or would not, want to undergo the process of certification in order to sell their coffee as officially organic. I was curious to examine the possible motives for and/or incentives behind this move, as well as the position of coffee processors on the matter. And while this thesis is still concerned with the question of who desires the production of organic coffee, and why, it has also shifted in order to adjust to the particular farming practices of the community I worked in, and the discursive logic of organic coffee production.

The organic coffee discourse will be examined more closely in order to assess what it signifies, how it operates, and what, if any, challenges are being launched against it. Essentially, what is of interest is how a local product, loaded with symbolic value, is caught in a web of global relationships. In light of the apparent success of the conscience

market, we should be able to link moral and political values with the act of consumer choice and symbolic value to a particular commodity... But what does all this really mean for small-scale organic coffee producers in Mexico?

Methodology

In order to explore these vaguely interrelated questions, I sought to gain a sense of the various agents involved in the initial stages of coffee production. My primary method in this regard was semi-structured interviewing. I spoke with coffee farmers based in a northern Sierra community. Almost all of the producers there were affiliated in some way with Oaxaca's largest producer union, *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café* (CEPCO).

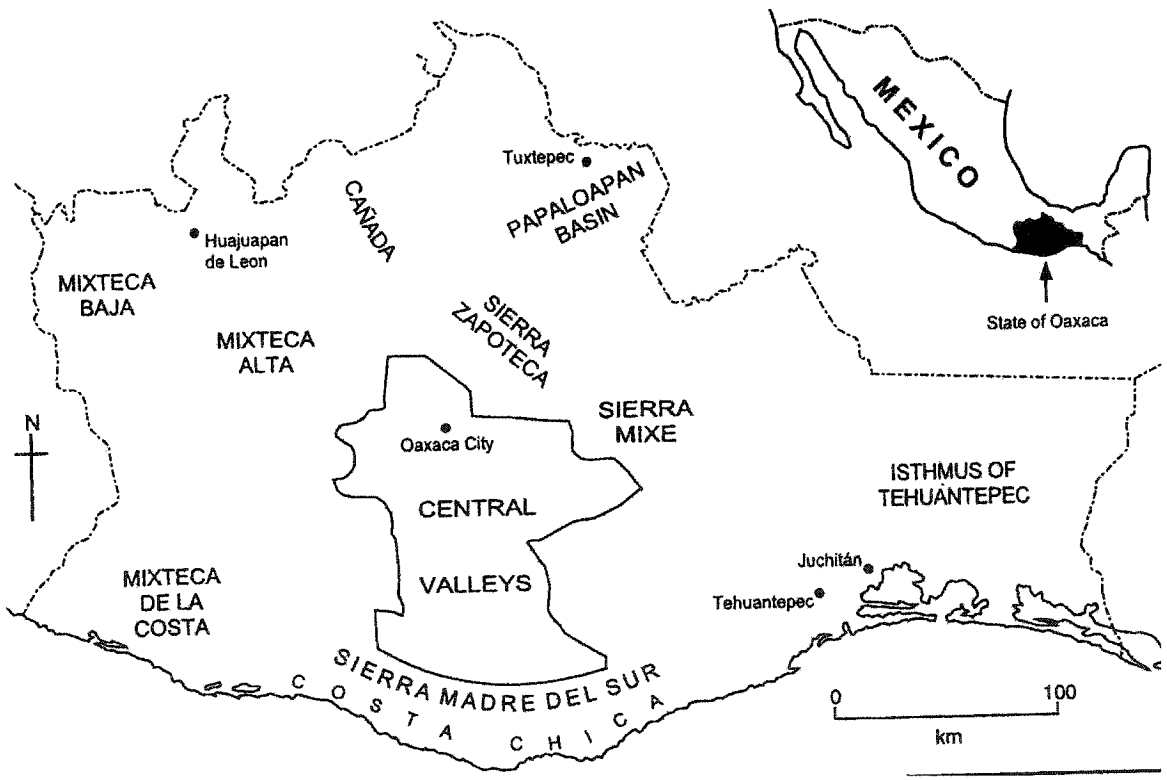
I also interviewed a CEPCO staff member who oversees the production and processing of organic coffee. This was to help distinguish the discursive similarities and differences that might exist between farmers and the administrative body of their organization. Additional literature provided by and about CEPCO enables a clear sense of their mandate and motives. I felt that studying CEPCO was particularly instructive, as they work with more that one-third Oaxaca's 58,600 coffee-growers (Mace, 1998: 5).

In addition to these interviews, I spoke with two representatives of one of Oaxaca's largest private coffee-processors, as they have recently introduced an organic production division. This provided me with another angle from which to appreciate the discourse and incentives surrounding organic coffee production. I also conducted research at a variety of institutions in the city of Oaxaca, ranging from the *Secretaria de Desarrollo Industrial y Comercial* (SEDIC), the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geographia e Informatica* (INEGI) and the Welte anthropology library.

Oaxaca: A Field Site and Locale of Small-Scale Coffee Farming.

Oaxaca is heavily involved coffee production. There are 58,660 producers in the state, which constitutes over twenty percent of all the farmers in the country; moreover, eighty-eight percent of the state's coffee farmers work with five hectares of land or less (Mace, 1998: 5). The state is divided into eight regions: *Cañada, Costa, Istmo, Mixteca, Papaloapan, Sierra Norte* (below distinguished as Sierras Zapoteca and Mixe), *Sierra Sur* and the *Valles Centrales*. Except for the *Valles Centrales*, every region produces the crop.

Map 1.0 Oaxaca: Regions and Major Towns



Source: Clarke (2000: 6)

Each region has its own physical and cultural characteristics. Seventy percent of the population is indigenous (the highest percentage in Mexico), and there is a rich variety of cultures and languages (Norget, 1997: 99). However, economically, Oaxaca is often conceived as a "backwater" of the country, rural and poor. The state's per capita income is not even one-third that of the national average (Norget, 1997: 99). Yet it is in these "backwaters" where Mexico's most lucrative agricultural commodity is grown. This paradox sets the stage for our endeavor to understand the production of organic coffee in a rural Oaxacan community.

Chapter One:
The Theory and Discourse of Small-scale Coffee Production in Oaxaca, Mexico

The voodoo priest and all his powders were as nothing compared to espresso, cappuccino, and mocha, which are stronger than all the religions of the world combined, and perhaps stronger than the human soul itself.
-Mark Helprin, Memoire from Antproof Case (1995) in Pendergrast (1999: IX)

Coffee is a global commodity. It has a prominent role in the world's agricultural trade, as the industry generates more than 34.5 billion U.S. dollars in annual sales[1]. The cultivation, processing, trading, transportation and marketing of this beloved beverage provides employment for millions of people worldwide. Coffee has been treated as the means to economic independence by certain struggling countries and it is often a crucial source of foreign exchange. It is a critical commodity in the daily lives of many people around the globe.

Understanding coffee as a global commodity, then, is an attempt to move beyond our cursory respect for the brew as we begin our daily routines. It is an attempt to see the interconnections between the field and our cup – and the challenges faced by people whose livelihood center around making that morning ritual possible. In this chapter, we will apply a globalist theoretical framework in order to elucidate small-scale coffee production in Oaxaca. The symbolic and discursive aspects of the industry will be explored in depth so that we might better understand the coffee crisis and the position of rural, marginal, indigenous farmers.

[1] Herbst, Kris (March 2001) "Revolution in a Coffee Cup: Waking the Sleeping Consumer Giant" www.changemakers.net/journal/01march/herbst.cfun

Global Trade and Local Economic Development

There are 25 million coffee producers in the world, in more than seventy countries[2]. The impressive number of people dedicated to cultivating coffee is elucidated by the fact that in North America alone, we consume more than four kilograms (or nine pounds) per capita, per year (Waridel, 2002: 31). This is equal to two cups of the drink each day for every man, woman and child on the continent.

Mexico is among those nations working to keep our cups full. There are a total of 273,655 producers in the country (Aranda Bezaury, 1992: 106). Coffee has a prominent role in the nation's economic and agricultural life, it is entangled in Mexico's changing place in a globalizing economic system. With the country's participation in the GATT and later NAFTA, Mexico was supposed to benefit from the reorganization of agricultural trade in North America.

The logical appeal of NAFTA was that Mexicans would be able to access cheaper cereals produced in the U.S. and Canada, while their own fruits and vegetables would have expedited entrance into the profitable northern markets (Waridel, 2002: 34). This assumption led then president Carlos Salinas and the Mexican government to increase agricultural aid for some export crops while reducing the support available to those producing staple foods such as corn or beans. The move caused a twenty-percent drop in national cereal production, in 1996 alone (Waridel, 2002: 34). Many farmers previously growing such crops have been forced to migrate to cities in search of other work.

For others, the solution has been in producing cash crops in a large enough volume that they might purchase basic grains for the household. This has resulted in

[2] www.equiterre.qc.ca/english/coffee/rte_conventionelle_eng/routec3.html

deforestation and intensive monocropping. It has also led to a loss of bio-diversity, increased agrochemical pollution, and loss of soil through erosion (Waridel, 2002: 34-35). And even then, only those with enough land to produce substantial amounts of a cash crop could take such (problematic) measures.

For countless small landholders in the country, subsistence agriculture continues despite the lack of government support. Moreover, we shall see that for the thousands who persevere in this regard and simultaneously continue to cultivate coffee, the neo-liberalization of the Mexican economy has even reduced the amount of aid available for those who grow the State's quintessential cash crop. In Oaxaca alone, there are 271,738 coffee growers working with ten hectares or less, making up seventy-three percent of the total for the state (Aranda Bezaury, 1992: 106).

Small-scale coffee producers in Oaxaca have found themselves struggling on both fronts – trying to feed their families while also bringing in some cash for other expenses. This crisis has encouraged producers to seek support elsewhere, primarily via joining up with one of the many community-based producer unions which now operate there[3]. These groups are working towards the improvement of the conditions that small-scale farmers face, by providing financial and material support. We will see how a particularly popular response within such groups has been to convert to certified organic coffee production, because this crop receives a significantly higher price.

While transnational occurrences (such as NAFTA and the worldwide crash of coffee prices) have put producers in a dangerous position, they have also created new market opportunities. Coffee that is certified organic is a prerequisite of the fair trade

[3] As of 2000, CEPCO alone was serving as an umbrella organization for forty-four different regional producer organizations (CEPCO, 2000: 39).

market. And fair trade is finding its place in the world market. The increase in annual sales of fair trade coffee from 1999 to 2002 in the United States jumped 632 percent, and in Canada it increased by 83 percent (CEPCO, 2002: Appendix 1). And while the global increase in fair trade coffee was a modest ten-percent, the increasing North American demand puts Mexican coffee producers in a stronger position from which to navigate the unsteady grounds of the global coffee trade.

Since coffee is a global commodity, the issues of capital, communication and culture that make up a large part of the discussion around globalization have a particular significance for this research. By tracing the discourses and decision-making that surround organic coffee production in rural Oaxaca, it becomes clear that the agents involved are not easily (or usefully) divided for my own analytical purposes. The symbolic, political and economic processes that bind these actors can reveal as much as their individual acts and positions.

There are multiple levels and sites of influence to consider. For instance, is it useful to limit the discussion to what was learned in San Juan Metaltepec, where the farmers I met lived? What of the dynamics between town and country, given that many farmers travel often to Oaxaca City, where CEPCO is based, for its meetings, or other times in search of wage labor to supplement their incomes? And since this study is concerned with both farmers and CEPCO, should we not also keep in mind other sites and actors that affect their work, including the agencies that provide certification or the companies to whom they sell their coffee? Are not these groups and locales mutually implicated in this discussion?

This research draws from a larger discussion within anthropology centered on the nature of globalization and its impact on local life (in this case for indigenous small-scale coffee producers in Oaxaca's Sierra Norte) [4]. We saw in the introduction how larger processes, such as the shift towards neo-liberalizing Mexican agriculture, and the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989, have affected the context of small-scale coffee farming.

These forces fall within Michael Kearney's (1995) understanding of globalization. Following him, our conceptualization focuses on the "social, economic, cultural, and demographic processes that take place within nations but also transcend them, such that attention to local processes, identities, and units of analysis yields incomplete understanding of the local" (1995: 548). More specifically, our concern here is the nature of globalizing economic relationships as they shape and constrain the choices available to, and decisions made by, indigenous small-scale coffee farmers. This entails trying to negotiate these levels of analysis – from transnational business to local agricultural practices and economic development.

Kearney's work is situated in a larger debate about globalization. As such, it is important to consider why his work stands apart from others concerned with similar phenomena. His framework is particularly applicable to the context of those people in the Sierra Norte who are eking out an existence in the cafetales that are carved into steep mountainsides.

Perhaps the trouble with the concept of globalization is that it is still seductive. It is a fresh word, still debatable in definition, still signifying a realm of intellectual

[4] See June Nash (2001) for a thorough examination of the Maya in terms of their indigenous new social movements, and how globalization affects local political mobilization in Mexico.

possibilities. And so, we might do well to take pause at this juncture to consider the possibility that globalization is, in certain ways, like its paradigmatic predecessor, modernity. It seems counter-intuitive. Is globalization not a break from the modern? Consider only that, like modernity just a few decades, ago globalization has many social theorists paying attention. Globalization might be like modernity inasmuch as we run the risk of getting caught up in its language (of movement and fluidity) and its logic (of hybridity and mutability) only later being able to turn a critical gaze towards its underlying assumptions and particular projects.

Anna Tsing distinguishes between globalization and globalism, a term that highlights the "endorsements of the importance of the global" (Tsing, 2002: 456). She is attempting to shake us from our global imaginings so that we might be aware of our theoretical frameworks and use of language in a more critical and engaged manner. This distinction will allow us to differentiate globalization as phenomena, as outlined in the introduction, and globalism, as a particular orientation in anthropological analysis. In other words, the production of organic coffee in Oaxaca may be shaped by the conditions of globalization – but how this is interpreted will be shaped by the analyst's globalism.

Let us return to Michael Kearney's work, particularly that concerned with migrant Mexican workers, as they travel between their home community of San Jerónimo, Oaxaca, and American border towns (1996). This work is clearly globalist in its expression, as he critiques modernist classifications of nation and peasant. His conceptualization is unique in that for Kearney,

> [t]he key feature of the global era is the "implosion" of center and periphery as distinctions between rural and urban as well as South and North disintegrate. Spatial and cultural discriminations become impossible in world of global flows, as nonunitary migrant subjects are formed in the interstices of past classificatory

> principles. In the unruly "reticula" Kearney conjures, however, he retains a dialogue with Marxian political economy that gives his multiplicity of identities and geographies its shape. The organization of the transnational economy creates differences of class, power, and value that forge subaltern and dominant social niches of identity and agency.
>
> (Tsing, 2002: 468)

Kearney's theorizing draws from his ethnographic experience in Mexico and the United States. And his idea of "implosion" is especially useful for elucidating Oaxaca's coffee industry. The imagery of the South and North imploding is rich with the possibilities of confounding and complicating our understanding of commerce and production. Implosion makes it difficult to sustain a linear narrative whereby coffee is grown in rural Oaxaca, processed in its cities, and transported from its coasts and airports to Northern markets.

Instead we must juggle a multiplicity of sites, actors and their varying projects as mixing and influencing in unexpected (and not necessarily equal) ways. That is, we cannot simply tell a story of how organic coffee gets to market from this perspective. Rather, we are encouraged to seek out the social, political and economic complexities that sustain the networks whereby people and coffee are able to move at all.

Kearney's globalism is always focused on the agency of the subaltern who "are particularly aware of their need to survive – politically, economically, and culturally – in worlds that others have made; the imagination is never enough for them to create autonomy and self-determination" (Tsing, 2002: 469). His perspective has the advantage of investigating socio-economic and political intricacies while resisting their glossing into abstract globalist imaginings[5]. He disrupts modernist categories of

[5] This is distinct from Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Ulf Hannerz (1996), two noted globalists who have organized their approaches via making sense of Indian diaspora and African cosmopolitans,

development/underdevelopment, rural/urban, etc. in order to launch a globalist, yet thoroughly engaged critique of the political realities that constitute globalization.

Building on Kearney's understanding of globalization, as well as his globalist orientation, this study seeks also to incorporate Tsing's caveats regarding how to proceed with anthropological analysis in a global age. She argues that "the global" can be researchable if certain constraints are kept in mind:

> I would begin by finding what I call "projects", that is, relatively coherent bundles of ideas and practices as realized in particular times and places...Projects are to be traced in relation to particular historical travels from one place to another; they are caught up in local issues of translation and mobilization; although they may be very powerful, we cannot assume their ability to remake nature and society according to their visions.
>
> (Tsing, 2002: 472).

Therefore it is possible to frame this study as a certain kind of globalist project centered on an interest in why (or why not) indigenous small-scale producers are moving towards increasing organic coffee production in Oaxaca. We must juggle the need for sensitivity to local contexts and issues, while also considering extra-local factors that impinge upon and shape these contexts.

Capitalist Discourses and Coffee as a Symbolic Commodity

Prior to his own globalist writings, Arjun Appadurai explored capitalism as a social order, taking a particular interest in the role of commodities and their circulation. He suggests, "...it is quite clear that capitalism is itself an extremely complex cultural and historical formation, and in this formation commodities and their meanings have played a critical role" (Appadurai, 1986: 49). This perspective seems consistent with

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respectively. Unlike Kearney, their position emphasizes human movement and the consequent "world making power of imaginative perspectives" (Tsing, 2002: 469)

Marshall Sahlins' argument that commodities bear symbolic as well as exchange value[6]. Capitalism warrants consideration as more than an economic system. Indeed it has been demonstrated again and again that our economic and socio-cultural lives are not so easily separated (for example Sahlins, 1976; Appadurai, 1986; Harvey, 1989).

But in what specific ways do commodities play a critical role? Appadurai argues that they "represent very complex social forms and distributions of knowledge... The production knowledge that is read into a commodity is quite different from the consumption knowledge that is read from the commodity" (Appadurai, 1986: 41). Following this, politics and symbolic valuing in exchange are not distinct from capitalism, but rather are integral to it. A regime of value is what brings the consumer and producer together in the process of exchange, yet we cannot assume that this value is an equivalent understanding. The conceptualization of value and the interests at stake are not necessarily identical (Appadurai, 1986: 57).

Thinking specifically of organic coffee production, we can conceive of a "politics of authenticity and of authentication" as Appadurai calls it, whereby producer and consumer (and all of the actors who mediate their relationship) are engaged in a faceted and complex dynamic of legitimizing their mutual extraction of value (1986: 57). Consumers seek the symbolic value and consequent enjoyment of organic coffee. Producers seek their livelihood: coffee in exchange for the currency that will allow them access to other goods.

Authenticity, from the consumers' position, assures that they are purchasing a product that is legitimately organic (that is, certified as such). It is a guarantee that they

[6] Scott Lash and John Urry take a similar position, describing the contemporary global economy as "the economy of signs" (1994).

are getting what they paid for. The politics of authentication have a distinctly different significance for producers, however. From their position, the authentication of their product as organic is what assures them that they will be paid what they are entitled to. Even if coffee is "passively" organic – that is organically produced, but not certified – it is not rewarded on the market with a higher price than conventional coffee. The authentication of certified status is crucial.

In order to highlight this bifocal relationship regarding the importance of authenticity, I employ the term "conscience market". This term identifies the symbolic, political and economic "space" that is negotiated by producers and consumers. It highlights the nature of this niche market that is concerned with narrowing the gap between them and building an imagined relationship of mutual benefit. A conscience market aims to describe the recent flourishing of "fair trade" and "organic" product markets under the light of the importance of authenticity.

The conscience market identifies a set of goods as socially marked, so that the act of buying "organic" coffee then becomes a symbolic act. However, it brings attention to the fact that this act of buying has been encouraged through a conscious promotion of the product. That is, the symbolic value of organic coffee is not necessarily inherent to it, but rather is deliberately cultivated and designed to appeal to the conscience of the consumer.

For the farmers in San Juan Metaltepec, organic certification carries the power of commanding a significantly higher price for their coffee[7]. For consumers, the authenticity of that certification commands symbolic value, the very sign that makes it precious. Nevertheless, it is not simply a set of agricultural criteria that render organic coffee

desirable. There is a larger discourse that operates to implode the gap between producer and consumer, to create an imagined relationship at the heart of this value.

Clearly, from a producer's perspective, the fact that certified organic coffee commands a higher price is crucial. Indeed, many within the industry itself admit that this point is often what stimulates the initial interest in and incentive to converting to organically certified production[8]. This situates organic coffee growing squarely in the realm of local economic development. Yet this is not our sole concern. Other aspects are also being invoked here. At this point let us examine a variety of examples of what I term the "organic coffee discourse" in order to consider this issue further:

Welcome to the Café Campesino website (www.cafecampesino.com). You arrive at an earthy colored homepage inviting the reader to "learn", "explore" and "shop". There is also a "consumer info" page on the site, where they list the "many benefits of Organics"(1). They write that for "the health conscious, chemical free products are healthier for the human body and contain all natural products", for "the environmentalist, organic products keep dangerous chemicals out of the environment and maintain the natural balance of ecosystems" and for "the social justice advocate, organic coffee sells at a higher premium adding to the farmer's income and standard of living" (1).

Another example of the organic coffee discourse at work was evident in a café I visited in Oaxaca. La Café Antigua Gourmet provides pamphlets to explain where the organic coffee some from. One states:

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[7] I was informed that in Metaltepec, prices could vary a great deal – with semi-processed, certified organic coffee being valued at 11.50 pesos per kilo by CEPCO to as low as 2 or 3 pesos per kilo for unprocessed, uncertified beans as sold to a local *coyote* (middleman).

[8] Herbst, Kris (March 2001: 5-9) "Revolution in a Coffee Cup: Waking the Sleeping Consumer Giant" www.changemakers.net/journal/01march/herbst.cfun

Discourse Example 1.

The Thanksgiving Coffee Company boasts the slogan "Delicious Coffee... Organic of course!" They offer a specific brand titled "Organic Aztec Harvest".
(www.thanksgivingcoffee.com)

We are producers of coffee, part of a community that partakes with many others and resists the onslaught of globalization. We defend our identity and our culture. We endeavor to produce QUALITY, from the bush right into the cup. We want to meet the demand of the markets, both the one of fashion and the one of culture and tradition, with good coffee. This is our work and our commitment as producers and as marketers of PLUMA COFFEE.

These companies are calling upon a number of concerns in order to catch our interest and attract our business. These issues can be organized around a few dominant themes. First there is the environmental. This consists of a declaration of organic agriculture as both more healthful and ecologically sound. It may also assert that organic agriculture is a vibrant contribution to local ecosystems. Moreover, it may be linked up to the second theme, that of indigenity, inasmuch as organic coffee production is presented as "traditional" or non-agro-industrial. This may belie an assumption that by virtue of being grown by indigenous farmers, there is an element of "tradition" intrinsic to the process.

The Green Mountain Coffee Roasters are announcing the fact that with the introduction of Fair Trade Organic Café Verde™ the National Wildlife Federation and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters are joining forces to call attention to both environmental issues and the economic crisis that millions of small-scale farmers are facing.
(www.greenmountaincoffee.com)

Discourse Example 2.

Another theme is that of social justice, invoking the economic crisis faced by small-scale farmers and our ability to "help them". Indeed, in the Oaxacan context, this

theme and that of indigenity are often interwoven, as the producers are customarily indigenous. As for indigenity, there are a variety of feasible expressions. Again, appeals to the "tradition" or "culture" of the producers and their organic farming are often invoked. The theme of indigenity carries with it assumptions about how indigenous people relate to the land, often implying that organic agriculture is "natural" for them, indeed, that they are in their own nature more attuned to environmental protectionism[9].

Underlying the organic coffee discourse are expressions of what I consider as the "desirability" of the indigenous producer. By this I mean the power of this identity to attract consumers. It is for this reasons that there is an "Aztec Harvest". There is little evident concern here for the details – that these farmers may in fact be Mixe, Zapotec or Maya. By using the Aztec nomenclature, the consumer is coaxed to envision a paradoxically specific *and* "generic" indigenous producer with whom they might support in the solidarity of their consumption.

These three themes are not only useful to corporate bodies seeking our alliance to the conscience market, however. There are others involved here. For example, Thelma Mejía, writing for the Organic Consumers Association (O.C.A.) notes that "indigenous coffee-growers in central Honduras adopted farming methods in 1999 to fight the effects of plummeting international coffee prices. Four years on, they have staked a claim on the competitive global market and describe their experience as a "re-discovery" of the earth" (2003: 1).

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[9] Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo and Ronald Nigh (1998: 143) have argued that the self-representation of indigenous coffee-growers as people in harmony with nature can be used as a form of "cultural capital" in the global marketplace. However, they suggest that this tactic is as much concerned with articulating the agricultural traditions and ethnic identity of producers as it is with tapping the conscience market (1998: 144).

The quotes selected from the farmers for this article include such statements as "We decided to try another form of cultivation and we have been reunited once again with the earth and its riches" (2003: 1). And "we stopped using chemicals and have staked our bets on organic farming which is none other than planting crops as God has mandated, in harmony with nature" (2003: 1-2). She concluded that for these producers organic coffee serves as "a survival mechanism" (2003: 2).

Discourse Example 3.

> In a student newspaper, there is an article that urges, "Canadian coffee drinkers have choices as consumers and , if they choose to drink fairly traded coffee, they are supporting equality, fair wages and self-sustainable development".
> (Zohreen Murad, April 3, 2003: McGill Daily)

The O.C.A. even has an Organic Community Exchange ("a fair trade delegation to the heart of Chiapas") whereby "delegations are designed to enrich our knowledge of poverty and malnutrition" (see www.chiapasmexico.org). For the price of 750 U.S. dollars, one can travel to southern Mexico and meet with community leaders "on the front lines of the fair trade and organic coffee movements" (ibid.). We, the coffee consumers, are invited to visit and stay in local communities to "learn about indigenous culture, autonomous indigenous governing systems, and the use of organic agriculture as a means to self sufficiency" (ibid.).

Another potent example of the discourse at work is found in a photographic essay about organic coffee production in Mexico, and the tone remains consistent. It states:

> The process of converting to organic agriculture is compatible with traditional agricultural practices and involves a vision of relations with nature unlike that underlying the green revolution. It is not only a matter or preserving the environment, but also of enriching and enhancing it. It is not only a matter of earning money, but also of bringing together the realms of work and ethics.
> (Poniatowska and Hernández Navarro, 2000: 42)

Such prose is peppered generously with gorgeous black and white photographs of indigenous campesinos in cowboy hats and *huaraches* (sandals), women marching together on the way to the harvest, and children smiling – light on their faces as it falls between the leaves of a cafetal…

Here again we see the strands of environmental, social justice and indigenity themes woven together in order to sway consumers. They seem dedicated to convert coffee drinkers to organic brew. Each is a cultivator of the discourse of organic coffee production.

Discourse Example 4.

> On Friday May 3, 2002 *La Jornada*, a prominent Mexican national daily, features an article about the coffee crisis and its dire consequences in the Hidalgo region. It quotes a producer stating "We are capitalists, but without any money". (Camacho, 2002: 39)

These cases illustrate an appeal that is being made to the reader as a consumer. This is the discourse of the conscience market. It is clear and unequivocal. Buying organic coffee is the right thing to do. There is a concerted effort to implode the space between the "first" and "third" worlds. They are linked up in this discourse and its very potency is derived from the imagined relationship that is forged when one is a conscious organic consumer. And this is only what is directed to the consumer's end of the commodity chain.

CEPCO and the Organic Coffee Discourse

Farmers face a similar discourse regarding the reasons for, and benefits of conversion to organic production. *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca*, or CEPCO, is the largest association of coffee producers in the state of Oaxaca.

They operate both as an umbrella organization for several smaller coffee-producer unions, and also as a union itself. CEPCO provides compelling examples of this discourse, which can be thought to have a significant role in Oaxacan coffee production, given that the organization represents about one-third of the producers in the state.

Every two years since its inception in 1989, *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café* has had a general assembly. It is a time for reflection on what goals have been met, what projects implemented, and to analyze problems, to plan new alternatives. In the summary of the 1998-2000 assembly, held in Oaxaca City in late November of that year, their program was made explicit. On the first page, it states "today it costs us more to produce [coffee] than what we are paid for it" (my translation, 2000: 1).

The report goes on to say that, at "the base of our mission 'to fight for a better life'" is the need to concentrate attention towards the "organic coffee producers, not only because their production brings better prices and leads to better productivity, but also because they show great discipline and responsibility, which reflects the distinct areas [of work] we are developing" (my translation, 2000: 1).

This is an interesting claim when CEPCO boasted over 20,000 members, yet at the time of the report there was a total of only 3,854 producers who were a part of the "organic coffee program" (2000: 69). This marginalized about eighty percent of the membership from the organization's most basic priorities. Yet when I interviewed the director of CEPCO's organic division just two years later, he informed me that more than seventy percent were now in transition or are currently producing organic coffee. This strongly suggests that CEPCO has a long-term interest in increasing conversion to

organic production and becoming a specialized, niche market, coffee coordinator. One can imagine that the message was clear at the 2000 general assembly for those farmers on either side of the certification fence.

CEPCO produces its own brand of coffee, named "Café Café – Direct Organic" and even its label resonates with the discursive examples we have considered above. It reads:

> 100% Arabica – roasted and ground
> with the flavor and the tradition of the indigenous Oaxacan producer.
> Ecologically cultivated by Oaxacan indigenous coffee-growing families
> and sold directly through their organization,
> *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca.*

This suggests that both in terms of their public self-representation, and their internal priorities, CEPCO is very much aligned with the use of the themes of environment, social justice and indigenity to encourage the production and consumption of organic coffee. How effective is this strategy? CEPCO's director of the organic division recounted the following:

> In the first years of the promotion to incorporate people into the organic program... in those years '93, '94, '95 there were still good prices for coffee...the people did not seem very interested. But when the prices started to drop, then people saw the production of organic coffee as an alternative to the crisis...
> (July 5, 2002)

So the global coffee crisis encouraged small-scale farmers in Oaxaca to seek some means to improve their condition. This might translate as migration to urban centers in search of work, or for others, making the transition towards organic certification is an option that is being embraced[10]. Yet for all the language of "tradition" and "nature", these farmers are making essentially pragmatic, economic decisions. It is an unlikely

coincidence that interest in CEPCO's organic program surged at the same time as the prices for standard coffee dropped. Yet why not direct a more financial argument towards the producers then? As seen in CEPCO's annual review, the organization is well aware of the importance of this reasoning. But they do not stop there.

Icons and Authenticity: Indigenous Identity

Jorge Hernández-Díaz is a sociologist at the Benito Juarez Autonomous University in Oaxaca City. The focus of his research is coffee production and its implications for marginal campesinos. He explained in an interview that prior to INMECAFE's demise in 1989, the national institution served as the organizer, buyer, promoter and price regulator (that is, it could provide subsidies if prices on the international market fell) for coffee in Mexico. He argued that the farmers were not interested in mobilizing when INMECAFE was in place, because in essence the state had already organized them.

However, today, given the void left by the institution, and the state of the crisis in general, there are a number of independent producer unions (like CEPCO) that are enlisting small-scale farmers (Interview June 10, 2002, see also Piñón Jiménez and Hernández-Díaz, 1998). What is curious here though, is that Hernández-Díaz has noted a shift in discourse since CEPCO and other such organizations have established themselves. He states that over the past five years or so, members have moved from describing themselves simply as persons, towards a discourse that emphasizes their indigenous campesino identity.

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[10] In fact a number of men in San Juan Metaltepec told me that they use both strategies. They maintain their cafetales, while also making periodic trips to Oaxaca City throughout the year in order to work on construction or road maintenance crews and other forms of temporary work.

I would argue that this is because CEPCO and other organizations seeking to tap the conscience market are not simply economic in nature, but have a politico-ideological element as well. Indeed this element is what would "authorize" CEPCO to make certain claims, as they do on their packaged coffee, allowing them to demonstrate their alliance to "Oaxacan indigenous coffee-producing families". And this is crucial for their success in the conscience market. While everyone can admit that better prices might be what gets a farmer in the door – they imply that these other reasons, these grand themes, are what will make them stay...

This cannot be made more explicit than by what an executive of the Ecom Coffee Group, one of the state's largest private coffee-processors, recounted in an interview. He described their new "Adopt a Cafetal" project, which is also designed to promote organic production among small-scale farmers who are seeking alternatives in the face of the crisis. He said that the idea is to rekindle at once specific "cultural traditions" as well as a desire to work with coffee (Interview, July 29, 2002). The project begins with a "diagnostic stage" where workshops are held to work towards various goals:

- To organize the community of producers as a group (a cooperative).
- To convert to the requirements of organic production.
- To convert the attitude of campesinos towards the earth, water etc...
- To foster sustainable forests and shade grown coffee, to abstain from water pollution, etc...
- The program also obligates producers to participate, to voice their concerns and to contribute to planning the future directions of the project.

This mandate suggests what the executive described as "corporate responsibility". But it is significant that the producers themselves, rather than coffee production, seem to be the focus of attention, the reason for the program, and indirectly, the source of the problem (i.e., they must be organized, their attitudes changed, obligated to participate

etc...). Why is a coffee processor taking an interest in the "rekindling" of the cultural traditions of the producers? It is for the same reason that CEPCO highlights its ecologically sound, socially just, indigenously produced organic coffee.

The politics of authenticity are relevant here. The explicit effort to "convert the attitude of campesinos" indicates that this process of organic certification extends beyond meeting the agricultural criteria. There is a social, educational dimension that cannot be overlooked. While CEPCO may not state its own aims as bluntly, I would suggest that the discursive shift towards the highlighting of an indigenous campesino identity also indicates that there is a process of enculturation taking place.

Small-scale producers may not simply be being taught how to produce coffee for the conscience market. Perhaps they are also being taught how to consider and represent themselves as the icons of this market. We will examine how effective a strategy this has proven to be in chapter three. Nevertheless, the campesinos are a critical part of a program that occupies a specific and meaning-laden position in our globalizing economy. They are the marginalized, indigenous, small-scale, coffee producers. And so they are the reason for CEPCO, for Ecom's projects, for all of the organizations that are mobilizing these farmers. The cultivated representation of this particular identity may be what draws consumers in, the point of departure for building relationships of economic solidarity.

From the themes of environmentalism, social justice, and indigenity, construed widely, organizations like CEPCO are able to derive their symbolic value. The discourse works to demonstrate their authenticity and serves as their evidence as legitimate suppliers on the conscience market. While a label stating "certified organic" is a potent source of "proof" for consumers, it is also the narratives of cultural traditions, of shaded

Mexican mountainsides, of farmers in harmony with nature, that help win consumers over.

The organic coffee discourse lays an appealing foundation for an imagined relationship the consumer is seeking. It is, in essence, a strategy to symbolize and endorse an entire code of ethics. As a result, our indigenous, small-scale producers become just as important to Ecom or CEPCO as the certification label. Indigenous identity can be argued to have a powerful symbolic value, one not lost on those sustaining the discourse of the conscience market.

Perhaps this point is best illustrated by my first visit to CEPCO's headquarters in Oaxaca City. Upon walking into the modest complex, I noticed a few campesinos hanging around outside, likely there for a meeting with a technician or program director. On entering the office, it became clear that the administration is overwhelmingly (if not entirely) staffed by light-skinned mestizos. The same can be said about my visit to the Ecom Coffee Group's offices. This is not necessarily shocking. But it does serve to highlight the constructed nature of CEPCO's self-representation. It is difficult to conceive that the organization's permanent, paid, staff are experiencing market instabilities and economic insecurity born out of the coffee crisis in the same way as the producers.

Moreover, I draw attention to this construction as it also reveals another facet of a processor's relationship to its producers. While the organic coffee discourse we have seen thus far is one that aligns itself clearly with supporting indigenous farmers in this time of crisis, there runs beneath a dynamic that emerges upon closer inspection. An interdependence – between the organizers and the organized, the producers and the processors, those in need of aid, and those who are poised to offer it. This is not sheer

benevolence. Be it a democratic collective like CEPCO or a private company such as Ecom, these processors require the farmers as much for their symbolic value as for their productivity.

This point is made most clear in light of Ecom's "Adopt a Cafetal" program. The company purchases coffee from large fincas (plantations) all over the state. And yet they are moving towards isolated rural communities, where individual producers work an average of two hectares of land. The expense and resources necessary to organize and transport coffee scattered across the Oaxacan Sierras hardly seems worth it! Yet it is. So much so that Ecom is contacting communities that are already working with other groups (including CEPCO) in an effort to recruit new members. There is, in fact, a real degree of tension and competition between these groups. Clearly there is something desirable about the participation of the iconic, small-scale, indigenous, producer[11].

How strange that there might be organizations like CEPCO *competing* with companies like Ecom *in order to help* producers. How could such a situation arise? The next chapter will consider the history of coffee production in Mexico, and particularly Oaxaca, in order to explore this issue. An institutional analysis should reveal how CEPCO has risen to such prominence, and how the crisis has come to bind producers, processors, and consumers in a globalizing economy.

[11] It should be noted that while such iconic status is in this case idealistic, strategic, and useful for tapping the conscience market, John Galaty has found that it can also be used to stereotype and negatively represent indigenous peoples as "exotic" and "unmodern" (Galaty, 2002: 201-203).

Chapter Two:
The Context of Coffee Production in Mexico -- Historical and Institutional Analyses

...nature, which does not trouble herself about commerce, had planted neither sugarcane nor coffee trees there.
-Karl Marx (1848) in Pendergrast (1999: 21)

In the previous chapter we considered how the current discourse surrounding organic coffee has been used by organizations like CEPCO to encourage small-scale farmers to have their lands certified, and how the discourse places these same farmers in the limelight of the conscience market. In fact Oaxaca's indigenous marginal producers are so critical in their position as icons of the conscience market, as they are represented by this discourse, that processors are competing for their membership. In this chapter, we will examine how such a situation could arise by tracing key historical moments of the history of coffee production in Mexico. This will lay the groundwork for a more detailed examination of *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca* (CEPCO) and its significance for producers today.

However, before we begin, it is important to assess how anthropology might be concerned with the history of a commodity in the first place. Consider the question that Sidney Mintz puts forward in his landmark study of the historical significance and cultural importance of sugar, "Sweetness and Power" (1985). He asks us,

> ...what could be less "anthropological" than the historical examination of a food that graces every modern table? And yet anthropology of just such homely, everyday substances may help us to clarify both how the world changes from what it was to what it may become, and how it manages at the same time to stay in certain regards very much the same.
>
> (1985: xxvii)

It is through sugar that Mintz attempts to trace the development of the West after 1650, in all its continuity and change. It is the desire for, and production of, sweetness that sustains the vast scope of this project. "Sweetness and Power" (1985) challenged the range of anthropology and carries striking parallels in terms of the coffee industry, but it also raises some interesting questions for those who attempt to speak meaningfully about people's lives while following the path of a commodity.

It could be argued that by studying the history of things, rather than people, specific histories could be skirted, and the presentation of historical facts might be offered up less problematically. For example, a statement such as "coffee arrived in Mexico sometime in the mid-eighteen fifties" seems benign enough. By putting coffee in the center of the discussion, cultures and contexts wherein coffee moved around the world, and how it was received, become less politically charged. The reasons why certain people brought this specific product to that particular place and what the encounter meant to those who experienced it are not necessarily included in this discussion.

The faceted histories of coffee could instead be concealed as one, politically muted series of dates and facts, independent of cultural significance. However, Steven Topik and Allen Wells suggest that "commodities allow us to see the interaction between local geography, resources, and laborers and the forces of the world economy in a most concrete way. The study of export goods reveals more than simply the process of economic development; work in the fields made and transformed cultures and societies" (1998: 3).

In fact, Topik and Wells argue that coffee "participated in a central way in the construction of cultures" as different groups adopted its cultivation and interacted with

others for its sale (1998: 38). The coffee bean can then be a vehicle by which we are able to explore moments of cultures in negotiation, of the dynamics and power imbalances that play out in our markets and social life.

A Brief History of Coffee in Mexico: Putting a Commodity in Context

Agriculture in Southern Mexico has a very long history (almost as long as it gets, actually). Historian Brian Hamnett has pointed out that maize was being cultivated in the Tehuacan and Oaxaca Valleys between 8000 and 5000 BC (1999: 24). This is comparable to the domestication of wheat in Syria and Mesopotamia around 9000 BC and 8000BC, respectively (Hamnett, 1999:24). Yet while the cultivation of coffee may have started in the region later than many parts of Latin America, Oaxaca has long been a place of farmers.

The lands we now know as the state of Oaxaca cover about 95,000 km2, stretching north from the pacific coast of southern Mexico. The state is mountainous with elevations above 2000 meters in the regions of Mixteca Alta, the Sierra Norte and the Sierra Madre del Sur (Clarke, 1986: 6). These geographical details turn out to have had fascinating repercussions for the nature of colonialism in southern Mexico and the eventual arrival of the coffee plant.

It is likely that the Sierra Norte was inhabited by hundreds of thousands of people before Conquest (Chance, 1989: 13). This was not exactly open countryside that could be easily claimed by the conquistadors. In fact, the "Mixe wars" (between the Zapotec and Mixe, two prominent indigenous groups of the Sierra who battled for territory) were raging at the time the Conquistadors arrived (Chance, 1989: 14). The Spanish attempted

to settle near the principal line of combat in an effort to put an end to the hostilities. This was not an entirely successful venture for the Spaniards, as the final major attack known as the Mixe "rebellion", took place more than forty years after the town of Villa Alta was established (Chance, 1989: 14). Indeed, it suggests that colonial authority came gradually to the region.

The conquering of the Sierra was not a simple or quick victory. Initially, the Spaniards came to look for gold, but they did not find it. Moreover, it was another five years of extreme weather, difficult terrain and encounters with skilled warring peoples before they managed to settle Villa Alta in 1526. More importantly, the conquest can be imagined as particularly traumatic to the Sierra's indigenous populations because while they may have waged war among themselves, the Serranos had never been dominated by a foreign group (González, 2001: 43). This set them apart from many of Mexico's other indigenous peoples, and even others in what would become the state of Oaxaca, who had already encountered Aztec rule.

Spanish political power seems to have been relatively weak in the Sierra, given that Villa Alta was started with a population of only one-hundred soldiers, and the settlement failed to quell Zapotec and Mixe rivalries quickly. However, Roberto J. González has noted,

> the region was quickly drawn into world economic systems, and patterns of commodity production and consumption that were established during the colonial period had wide repercussions. Specifically, they helped form the blend of commodity production and subsistence farming that characterizes many Sierra communities today.
>
> (2001: 42-43).

The variability of the state's geography may have helped to protect indigenous populations from certain colonial impositions. The infamous Spanish haciendas, for

example, never really took root in Oaxaca as they did in other parts of New Spain's landscape, despite the immense fertile valley that is nestled in between the three colliding mountain ranges. Where haciendas were attempted in Oaxaca, they were usually destitute estates that often changed ownership (Hamnett, 1999: 89).

In the Sierra Norte, despite being graced with fertile soils, the Spaniards could not contend with the region's isolation and rugged terrain, which rendered cash cropping unfeasible (González, 2001: 51). Though commercial farming proved to be unproductive for the colonizers, subsistence farming in the region experienced an agricultural renaissance of sorts. Old World foods, ranging from citrus and fig trees, peaches and a variety of bananas, did well in the mountains. Other fruits and vegetables as well as chickens and pigs were also eagerly adopted (González, 2001: 52). From this perspective, the colonial encounter was not only one of violence and disease. It was also when the indigenous farmers of the Sierra discovered and used a plethora of new kinds of plant and animal life. And of course, in time, coffee too would come to be a vital crop, planted up and down the mountainsides.

Colin Clarke has noted that the Spanish considered the higher altitude regions inhabited by the Mixes and Chatinos too remote for any significant settlement (2000: 17). This region was hence spared the hacienda style of production due to the geographical constraints, which accounts for the predominance of small-scale cash cropping of coffee today. Oaxaca was still regarded as an important economic zone overall, producing cochineal[1] and henequen for the Empire and dominating the world's production at

[1] Cochineal is the name of a small Mexican homopterous insect, as well as the name of the dye that is produced by crushing its body. The dye was highly valuable due to the labor-intensive harvesting necessary for its extraction, and its unparalleled, vibrant crimson coloring.

various points in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (González, 2001: 45-46; Topik and Wells, 1998: 85-124).

The experience and impact of colonialism had a role in shaping the significance of the eventual arrival of the coffee plant in Mexico and throughout Latin America. In fact, Steven Topik and Allen Wells go so far as to describe the Latin American export boom of 1850 to 1930 (in which coffee was an important commodity) as a "second conquest" (1998). This period was one of post-independence throughout much of Latin America, and is characterized according to Topik and Wells, as its integration into the world economy through the export of raw materials.

This integration had already been initiated via colonial relationships whereby labor power and materials from the South were exploited to enrich European nations. What makes the "second conquest" different is that it was a voluntary move by independent states. It was the first time that Latin American countries were employing liberalism and export-based economics (Topik and Wells, 1998: 1). But the older relationships of supplying raw materials to fuel the economies of European and North American nations, appears undisturbed.

When the War of Independence ended in 1821, the independent nation-state of Mexico was officially born. Shortly thereafter, a new kind of plant arrived on the young nation's shore. Coffee was first brought to the port of Veracruz on the Atlantic coast sometime after 1850, and was soon being cultivated in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and other nearby states. Even now, most of Mexico's coffee is grown in these places. It is thought that coffee was introduced to Oaxaca between 1860 and 1880. The following years were intense with coffee production, as Mexico quadrupled the coffee for export from 1890 to

1900, given that the American consumer demand grew ever greater and supply had been stunted in the world's most prolific producer country, Brazil (Gonzalez, 2001: 198).

Indeed, with Brazil's gargantuan operation dominating the market in the late 1800s, there was little incentive for Mexican elites to invest in the crop. But sure enough, national production exploded in 1888, after the Brazilian crops were ruined by a plague. The Mexican government stepped in with land grants and tax breaks to encourage cultivation throughout the 1890s but when Brazil began to show signs of recovery, and the price for coffee began to drop again, those promotional activities fell away (Downing, 1987: 5). The government would not take interest in coffee production again until after the Second World War.

While in the Sierra's Mixe community of San Juan Metaltepec (Oaxaca), I was informed by the residents that coffee was not cultivated to any significant degree until the nineteen-twenties. This would likely have been on the community's own initiative, given that state support would not be significantly rekindled for another few decades. Again, the comparative isolation, and poorly developed infrastructure of the region might help explain why a crop actually well suited to the altitude and climate of the mountains seemed to have such a protracted distribution.

In Mexico, both small-scale and plantation based techniques have been used to grow coffee. In the Soconusco district of Chiapas, for example, there were fifty plantations of approximately three thousand acres each at the turn of the last century, but in Veracruz, the principal exporting state at the time, the landholdings tended to be much smaller (Topik and Wells, 1998: 65). In Oaxaca, there have been both styles of production, with large plantations in the southern Pluma Hidalgo region, but by and large,

small-scale operations dominated the landscape. One of the reasons for this was competition, pure and simple.

In order to compete against Brazil, Mexicans needed to produce a better quality bean at a lower cost. This demanded a more labor-intensive process, whereby the cherries would be carefully hand-picked only when ripe, rather than a single stripping of the branches, as was commonly done in Brazil. This also meant the same land and even the same tree was returned to again and again in a given season. In order to harvest in this manner, an abundant and cheap labor supply was required. Small-scale producers tended to rely on family labor, and generally engaged in subsistence farming as well. Therefore it was reasoned that low prices could be paid to the farmers, and that investments and overhead would be minimal (Topik and Wells, 1998: 66).

So who were the people growing coffee after the turn of the century? Theodore Downing has drawn three portraits of the Mexican coffee grower, based on their systems of production. "In the first system, a producer (patron) owns a large production and processing unit, which often includes over 200 hectares of coffee trees" (1987: 6). Large numbers of hired laborers were necessary for the harvest season. Often, poor migrant workers were brought to the plantation to pick the cherries and process them. This kind of seasonal work would allow the producer to keep his labor expenses lower throughout the rest of the year.

The second system "is formed of small producers, few of whom own more than 10 hectares of land. Except at harvest time, they cultivate their lands using family labor" (1987: 7). Small producers could not afford to process the coffee themselves, and would therefore either sell their crop to the large-scale patrons, or pay a fee in order to access

the equipment. These small-scale growers also lacked the financial support and credit opportunities that were made available to the patrons. Often, patrons became the local creditors, processors and purchasers for these farmers.

And finally, the marginal producer also emerged during the early years of the coffee industry. "Marginal producers own small parcels of land, with most holding less than two or three hectares. In contrast to the small producers, coffee is not the only crop planted" (1987: 8). They also grew subsistence crops such as maize, beans and squash. But coffee was the primary (and often the only) source of cash for the marginal producer. Family and friends contributed additional labor at harvest time. As for processing, the coffee was usually sun-dried and manually husked because this was much easier to transport than the fresh cherries, which can spoil easily.

A century later, these categories are still able to describe the basic systems that organize the Mexican coffee industry. In the Sierra Norte, the marginal producer is undoubtedly the most common. We need only add that when there is no patron in a community (for few, if any, people there are harvesting coffee on a large scale) marginal producers generally sell to a local (or nearby) merchant, known as a *coyote*. The *coyote* transports and resells the community's accumulated harvests to the processor, who is generally located outside of the Sierra.

The continuity of systems of production should not convey a sense of timelessness however. It is clear that in San Juan Metaltepec, for example, the establishment of an organic coffee program in 1995 by CEPCO speaks to the changing markets and the new opportunities and challenges that face this town of marginal producers.

Coffee and Bureaucracy: The Industry's Institutions

After the Second World War, the Mexican State sought the possibility of increasing tax revenues through the coffee sector. In October 1949, the National Commission of Coffee was created and the reentry of the government into the industry was marked (Downing, 1987: 12). However, the private sector had also taken the initiative to organize itself, and while the State began the process of building the commission, the industry formed a National Union of Coffee Producers (UNAC). Its membership consisted of large-scale producers, exporters and pre-existing, regional associations (Downing, 1987: 13).

These twin organizations existed side by side advantageously, however Downing notes striking differences between the two. While the Commission was a "fledgling" organization "with little direct contact with the countryside", UNAC was connected to the industry at a multitude of levels and in a variety of locations; and yet "together, they commanded a well established marketing system which was directly linked to non-member, small producers in the countryside through the three aforementioned systems of production" (Downing, 1987: 13-14). It was a mutually beneficial relationship, as UNAC benefited from government assistance, and the State watched export tax revenues rise.

The arrangement worked well while the market was favorable, but when international prices began to fall in the middle of the nineteen-fifties, each organization had to reassess their operation. The most pressing question was certainly that of who would be the one to absorb the losses when the industry was weak. This was of great concern given that after coffee prices attained a peak of nearly 100 dollars per sack in

1954, four years later the average price had fallen to 63 dollars per sack (Downing, 1987: 14). UNAC suffered from infighting as a result and eventually splintered, with the exporters forming their own group. The Mexican government's response, on the other hand, was to consolidate previously disarticulated agencies into a larger and stronger body. December 30th 1958 was the date when the *Instituto Mexicano de Café* (or INMECAFE) became the national body governing Mexico's coffee industry (Downing, 1987: 16).

INMECAFE was born in a climate of change and uncertainty, and so began cautiously by stabilizing prices via minimum purchase prices for the various types of coffee. It also established a few public processing plants and rural buying centers, but for its first seven years the Institute only purchased (up to) eleven percent of the country's harvest annually (Downing, 1987: 17). However, its structural position might help explain why the new bureaucracy would proceed with such deliberateness. INMECAFE was caught between responsibilities towards small-scale farmers and large exporters. Downing explains,

> before each harvest, the Institute confronted the serious problem of setting the official prices. If it set the prices too low, it could discourage future production and endanger the welfare of producers. Conversely, if set too high, exporters could be adversely affected, leaving the government holding an unwanted reserve of coffee which was too expensive to be sold in the world market.
>
> (1987: 18)

It was not until the 1970s, however, that INMECAFE opted for more aggressive intervention in the purchasing and sale of coffee. At that time the Institute adopted a stance that was oriented to working more closely with rural small-scale farmers and their communities, so that the organization's work might contribute to local economic development. More purchasing centers were opened and the Institute explicitly sought to

support the small-scale producers, particularly through providing access to government credit.

This intense penetration of the market was sustained by a combination of factors, ranging from the high international prices of coffee, a favorable national political climate and the fact that the Institute was well financed and marketed at the time (Downing, 1987: 27). Its influence and ability to reach small-scale producers would strengthen and weaken over the years, depending on the more or less favorable combinations of these elements. And as we shall see, when each and every factor was seriously threatened throughout the economic turmoil of the 1980s, INMECAFE's foundation would be rocked and the entire structure would threaten to come down.

However, the nineteen-seventies were a kind of golden age for the institution. Under the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) the government was much more interested in the coffee sector. Rural unrest was manifesting as peasant mobilizations, and Echeverría objected to the power of rural bosses (*caciques*) in many indigenous coffee-producing regions. His strategy was to restructure rural political life through federal intervention, by increasing INMECAFE's role in those communities (Porter, 2000: 120). The Institute worked with other government bodies, most notably, the National Bank for Rural Credit (BANRURAL) as well as FERTIMEX, the national fertilizer agency, in order to provide cheap credit and technical support to the struggling, and increasingly vocal producers.

This move can be seen as a challenge to rural bosses and large-scale exporters, given that the Institute was threatening their monopolies over transport, processing and marketing (Porter, 2000: 121). Most importantly, it was an indication of the

government's long-standing tactic of demonstrating their alliance to rural people, the "proof" of their dedication to the campesinos. It proved to be a savvy move, at once reinforcing the state's self-representation, while also working to quell the rising frustrations of small-scale farmers across the nation (Piñón Jiménez and Hernández-Díaz, 1998: 90-96).

Ultimately though, the growth of INMECAFE could not shoulder the effects of a depreciated of peso, the economic crisis, and neo-liberal reforms that characterized the Mexican economy of the late nineteen-eighties and early nineteen-nineties. While the low peso and a favorable international market were supportive of the industry as a whole, it was nevertheless a difficult time. The neo-liberalization of agriculture in Mexico was supported by the technocrats and protested by the peasants who suffered under the changes. By the end of the decade the strain was too much – and when the small-scale coffee farmers joined in with the voices calling for the end of INMECAFE, the dissolution of this agency was not far off.

The *Instituto Mexicano de Café* was finally dismantled in 1989, after being a unifying target for demonstrations, marches and sit-ins (Porter, 2000: 122). But such a prominent body of the industry could not fall gently. At least not for the people who were underneath. Robert Porter has argued that once "cut loose from state tutelage, small producers throughout Mexican agriculture found themselves faced with foreign competition precisely when prices for their inputs were increasing and prices for their crops decreasing" (2000: 122). Unfortunately the dissolution coincided with the abrogation of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in the same year. Suddenly,

small-scale producers could no longer count on fairly stable international prices, or on the public sector for support, as they reeled from these drastic changes.

In Mexico, the void left by INMECAFE meant that there were entire stages (such as processing and marketing) of the commodity chain that needed to be filled. Suddenly producer unions and the private sector were struggling to gain control of these stages (Porter, 2000: 123). Transnational corporations increased their control over the production stages by deposing local intermediaries and becoming directly involved in purchasing; they have also increased their control over the processing and marketing of instant and decaffeinated coffee within the country since the crisis began[2]. But producer unions also scaled up the chain.

A Closer Look at CEPCO

La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca (CEPCO) was established in 1989, clearly an attempt to ease the shock of the recently isolated marginal producers. CEPCO, as stated in chapter one, operates in two capacities serving both as an umbrella organization for several smaller coffee-producer unions, while also operating as a union itself. Their mission statement is "to promote and implement programs for the integral development of coffee producing families (to live better)" (my translation, CEPCO, 2000 n.p). And their basic principles include the autonomy of the regional organizations, democratic decision making, political, ideological and religious plurality, and transparency with resource allocation.

With the drop in world prices after the abrogation of the ICA and the dissolution of Mexico's national coffee institute, the early nineteen-nineties were a bleak time for

small-scale producers. In fact, by 1992 the average price paid to Mexican farmers was only 46.74 US cents per pound, fully sixty-five percent less what they received ten years earlier[3]. Producers in Oaxaca have been better able to weather the crisis than those in other states such as Veracruz and Chiapas, partly because of the number of producer unions there, and particularly because of CEPCO's well-timed arrival (Porter, 2000: 133).

Bill Mace argues that CEPCO would emerge due to the "combined efforts of over 20,000 small-scale coffee producers from various communities and organizations throughout Oaxaca" and "as a response to state austerity measures, with the intention of retrieving owed funds from the government after INMECAFE was dismantled" (1998: 21). The mobilization of these independent, small-scale farmers resulted in Oaxaca's new federation of marginal producers – CEPCO – and through this body they had access to, and even voting power within the state's new coffee council. Governor Heladio Ramírez (1986-1992) created the council after the demise of INMECAFE, and it was through it that CEPCO was able to appropriate some of the Institute's remaining infrastructure.

In figure 2.0 below, we are able to clearly see how INMECAFE and the ICA worked together to keep fairly stable prices throughout the 1980s for Mexican coffee growers. However, after 1989, the prices vary wildly and the market's volatility is evident. We are able to see the "first wave" of the crisis (1992) and then the spike in prices, which coincides with the flourishing of the specialty coffee business in North America and Western Europe, where suddenly high quality, arabica coffee was very

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[2] See María Cristina Renard (1992) for more regarding TNCs in Mexico, particularly Nestlé and General Foods.

[3] These prices are for arabica coffee, a high quality bean that is grown at a higher altitude than robusta – the other type of coffee. Arabica is predominantly grown in Mexico, and is generally treated as a "specialty" coffee, as it is usually harvested by hand and has lower production rates,

much in demand. However, as production of arabica increased around the world to satisfy the demand (in part from the infamous "lifestyle cafés" that have cultivated a new niche market throughout North America), once again the prices began the steady decline of the "second wave" of the coffee crisis. And producers struggled once again to find solid ground from which to raise their crops.

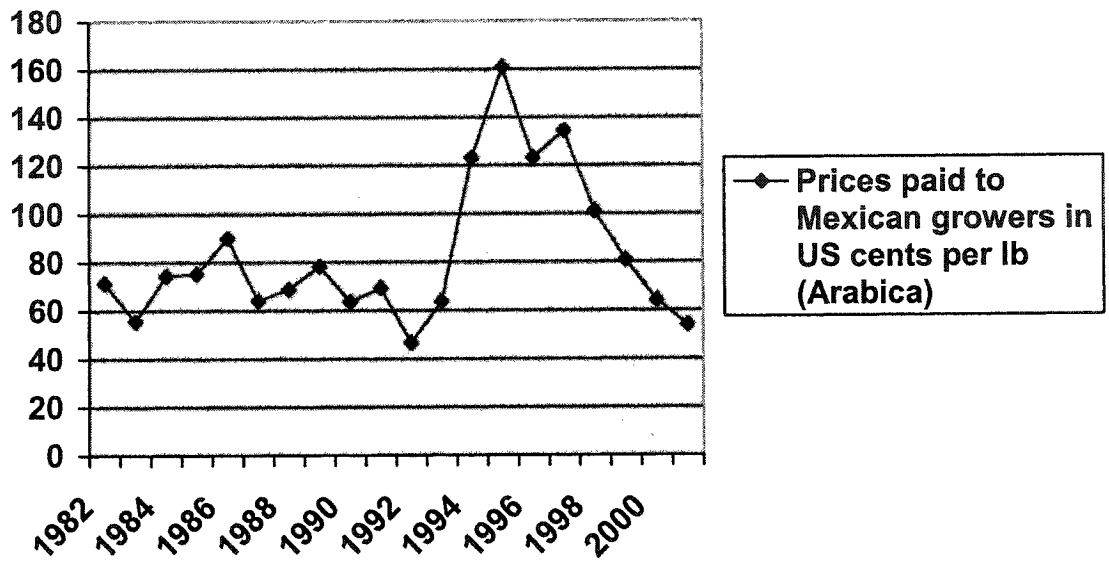

Figure 2.0

CEPCO began by immediately seeking the means to vertically integrate itself within the industry's structure – scaling the commodity chain from the bottom up, as it were. Indeed, CEPCO even managed to appropriate some of INMECAFE's agro-industrial infrastructure, including dry-processing plants and warehouses (Porter, 2000:128). However, this well-timed arrival was not simply some fortunate coincidence.

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as well as lower acidity, and a richer flavor than robusta. See appendix III for the specific prices paid to growers in Mexico for Arabica coffee from 1982 to 2001.

CEPCO's membership is at least thirty percent women, and reflects the diverse regions of the state, including members from Cañada, Mixteca, Papaloapan, Sierra Norte, Istmo, Costa and Sierra Sur. The members are also predominantly indigenous, at ninety-five percent, and include mixtecos, mazatecos, chiantecos, mixes, zapotecos, nahuas, chatinos, and chontales (CEPCO, 2000: n.p). In fact, the membership seems to fit Downing's description of the marginal producer rather well. On average there are six people per family, they cultivate about two hectares of coffee per farm, and harvest approximately 287 kilograms each year (CEPCO 2000, n.p; Mace, 1998: 23).

CEPCO is able to represent such a diverse and widespread group of people by creating multiple sites whereby farmers can learn about and engage with the organization. The headquarters are located in Oaxaca City, roughly in the center of the state. This is where monthly meetings are held, and the surrounding communities can then send a representative to learn about the group. In fact, once a community is organized and collectively producing coffee for CEPCO, they *must* send a delegate to keep up with business and/or learn about news projects etc. The delegate is expected to return home and pass on the information to the rest. In this way, a community can participate (if somewhat indirectly) even from remote locations.

Mace suggests that maintaining transparency throughout the organization's operations encourages producers to actively engage with CEPCO, instead of being passive members (1998: 23). This adds to the sense that those in the city and those in rural areas have a reciprocal responsibility to one another in ensuring the success of the organization. However, it should be stated that these points may reflect more of an ideal

rather than what necessarily transpires on the ground. There are of course difficulties affecting how such goals may be achieved.

First of all, there is no way to assure that information about new projects, the availability of technical support, or any other conclusions that are reached at a meeting are clearly and properly conveyed to a community once a delegate has returned home. This point is a challenge to address, and yet I have indeed heard complaints that attest to its importance. For those who do not make the trip to town once a month, there is the risk of being excluded or only partially informed as to what precisely is going on.

Even from San Juan Metaltepec, which is less than 200 kilometers from Oaxaca, it is a six-hour trip by bus due to the poor condition of the winding mountain roads. Therefore a second concern is that it could be quite frustrating to make regular trips to the city when harvest times (be it for maize or coffee) demand a member's energies at home, let alone during the rainy season, when roads are even more difficult to travel.

However, it is important to note that anyone is at least welcome to visit the headquarters anytime, and it seems fair to state that the fact that one can observe the monthly meetings inspired the trust of potential new members. This transparency can be interpreted as inviting and encouraging new members. Moreover, it should also be stated that the office provides a place where visitors can stay overnight, making the sometimes long journey to the city somewhat easier to manage.

CEPCO members receive an advance for their coffee, and once it has sold the producers will receive the rest of the payment. Mace has noted that farmers skeptical of this arrangement may sell part of their harvest to middlemen (*coyotes*) (1998: 29). CEPCO is clearly working hard to convince the farmers that this method of payment is

not some way of paying less, or avoiding it. When I visited the office, I noticed a poster that stated:

Not another kilo more to the coyotes
Market coffee with your organization

The poster features a drawing of two men bringing a sack of beans to the processing center, while a third man, standing in the distance, is being blown back by a cartoonish explosion. The imagery of mutual aid, and the language of "your organization" suggests that CEPCO is still trying to convince some members at least that they are not just another buyer – but rather a source of support for campesinos, CEPCO is "their" association.

Yet after a long history of being cheated and exploited by local bosses and *coyotes* there is a logic to the fact that producers are hesitant to hand over all of their harvest before receiving full payment. What if the market changes and the coyote has a higher price? It is quite reasonable that most feel better with a number of options available to them. Speaking of CEPCO and other producer unions who are fighting to break this pattern, Mace writes, "they realize that intermediaries are part of the larger problem of state politics and unfair commercialization and trade. These organizations promote the view that collectively they will overcome some of their existing problems" (1998: 29).

The question then becomes, how successful have they been in this endeavor? This is problematic because for organic production at least, CEPCO pays the consistent price of 11.50 pesos per kilo of certified, semi-processed (pergamino) organic coffee. This consistency is often described as one of the virtues of alternative trade. And it certainly provides a degree of stability for farmers who would otherwise be left to shoulder the

burden of a fickle market. However, when the market turns and prices offered by local *coyotes* is higher, it becomes difficult to argue that the long-term benefits of group solidarity outweigh the short-term gain of selling part of one's harvest at a higher price.

This dilemma actually represents more than just a question of trust for CEPCO's membership. It also indicates that there is a struggle between private industry and producer unions, in the context of the struggle for control over stages of the commodity chain[4]. At this point it may be useful to consider the chain in greater detail, so that we might better understand the conflict and its dynamics as it plays out in rural communities.

Considering the (Organic) Coffee Commodity Chain

The production of organic coffee usually begins with the provision of credit and/or organic fertilizer. This step is important because the prices paid at this point will affect the end profits available to a small-scale farmer. Moreover, historically, this is the point large-scale farmers and *coyotes* could take advantage of campesinos' need for capital, creating a cycle of indebtedness for marginal producers (Downing, 1987: 10; Magnuson, 1997: 40). We know that the state began to intervene throughout the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, but with the dissolution of INMECAFE, the costs for such preliminary inputs began to climb again.

The next stage is that of the harvest. This entails picking only the ripe cherries by hand, passing through the cafetal again and again until the season is over. In small-scale producing families, this labor is shared, though in Metaltepec four of the families I spoke

[4] This issue is by no means unique to CEPCO or even the Mexican coffee industry. Please see Deborah Sick's impressive study (1993) for a comprehensive analysis of the tension between cooperatives and private business.

with stated that they were sometimes able to afford to hire seasonal labor to help out[5]. This is extremely advantageous given that there is a fine line between harvesting the cherries once ripe and not having enough people to harvest all of the coffee before it falls from the branches and begins to spoil.

The next stage is that of processing. The first step is called "wet-processing" and involves passing the harvested cherries through a small, hand-powered depulper. This must be done within twenty-four hours or the coffee will begin to rot. Once the beans have been extracted from the fleshy fruit, they are washed in fermentation tanks. Finally, the beans are spread out on concrete patios, occasionally turned, and left to dry for about a week. The coffee is now called *pergamino* and is ready to be transported and stored. This is also the stage where coyotes or producer unions purchase the beans.

Coffee that has simply been harvested and left to dry as whole cherries is considered the lowest quality, and so campesinos can be paid as little as two or three pesos per kilo, even if the land has been certified as organic. Moreover, CEPCO cannot buy this *bola* coffee because it does not meet the organization's standards, and so campesinos without enough labor to process the beans immediately may be forced to seek outside buyers despite the low return. Organic *pergamino* coffee, on the other hand, can bring in as much as 11.50 pesos per kilo[6].

After "wet-processing" another stage is required to fully prepare the coffee for market. This is the "dry-processing" stage, where the thin, yellowish, parchment skin that

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[5] Local youth or temporary workers are paid between twenty and twenty-five pesos per day.
[6] Please note that looking across the prices for coffee in Mexico can seem inconsistent, because the status of the bean (as *bola*, *pergamino* or *oro*) affects both the price offered, as well as the way that the coffee is measured. For example, while campesinos recount their prices for organic *pergamino* in terms of a "pesos per kilo" ratio, the numbers for figure 2.0 reflect prices for *oro* coffee as a "cents per pound" ratio. These differences reflect the distinct levels of the commodity

covers the bean is removed by machine. It is then classified and sorted (also by machine) and finally bagged. It is now green coffee and ready for sale on the international market. This stage is also of crucial importance for organizations such as CEPCO because they now have a product that they can bring to market independently. Acquiring control over more of the stages of the commodity chain assures small-scale coffee farmers greater possible profits because less is being paid to private intermediaries (Porter, 2000: 116).

Once the coffee is at the green or "*oro*" (gold) stage it can be sold directly to exporters or importers. The beans are then transported from the dry-processing center to the rail or dock. Most Mexican coffee arrives in the U.S. where brokers who distribute it once again can buy it. However, a central premise of alternative trade is to reduce as many of the stages between producer and consumer as possible. Therefore it is much more likely that organic coffee would be sold directly to an importer/roaster. Roasting is the stage where forty percent of the commercial value of coffee is added, and most of this is done is consuming countries (Porter, 2000: 117).

CEPCO is capable of roasting and grinding small quantities of coffee, which are distributed through its two *Café Café* coffeehouses, located in Oaxaca City. However, most of the coffee is brought into the United States and Canada as green beans. The conscience market has created a space in a globalizing economy whereby producer unions such as CEPCO are scaling up the commodity chain, gaining control over the marketing, distribution and financing of their product, and cutting out importers and distributors (Porter, 2000: 118). This can only improve the incomes of small-scale producers.

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chain, and reveal the significant increase of value added to the product as it moves closer to the consumption stage.

And yet we must recall even as CEPCO works to climb the commodity chain, private enterprises are also extending their claims to various stages. As we have seen in the first chapter, in Oaxaca, the company Ecom Coffee Group now has an office for sustainable development projects, as they seek to move from processing and distribution to working directly in rural communities. This has lead to a collision between private business and producer unions as they compete to represent the indigenous, marginal producer. Rural communities such as San Juan Metaltepec have become the sites where this conflict is being played out, and it is loaded with symbolic and market value.

At this point it is perhaps useful to move beyond the organizations and institutions that have sustained Mexico's coffee industry over the years, towards the people and places where it really all begins. In the next chapter, we will take an in-depth look at the Sierra Norte's community of San Juan Metaltepec, in order to better understand how these campesino families are faring in the context of a coffee crisis, the burgeoning conscience market, and the competition for their loyalty as indigenous, small-scale producers.

Chapter Three: Organic Coffee Production as a Response to Crisis – A Case Study

These are Coffee People...
- Men With Guns, film by John Sayles (1997)

In chapter two we examined the historical trajectory of Mexico's coffee industry in order to contextualize and elucidate the current coffee crisis. This fosters a strong sense of how both national events (such as the dissolution of INMECAFE) as well as more global occurrences (like the abrogation of the ICA) contributed to the birth of CEPCO, and encouraged the cultivation of the organic niche within the conscience market. This move has shaped CEPCO's priorities and the manner by which they strive to climb the commodity chain. It has been also been demonstrated how such circumstances, in a climate of competition between CEPCO and private companies working in a similar capacity, are the key factors that have placed the marginal, indigenous producer in the center of a symbolic tug-of-war.

While the organic coffee discourse reveals much about the priorities and ethos of the conscience market, and illuminates CEPCO's current mandate, one might ask to what extent this discourse reflects the aims and incentives of Oaxaca's small-scale producers. In this chapter, we will consider the opinions of ten coffee-growers (and sometimes their families) in the Sierra Norte community of San Juan Metaltepec. While the interviews certainly do not allow us to generalize about the attitudes of all campesinos, they are able to provide rich illustrations of the encounter between the practice of organic coffee farming and its discourse in a rural Oaxacan community.

Portrait of a Community: San Juan Metaltepec

San Juan Metaltepec is a Mixe community of subsistence farmers. The name Mixe is of Nahuatl origin, and is most likely derived from *mixtil*, or *micqui* ("death"), however the Mixe call themselves *Ayuk*, meaning "word" or "language"; the name is etymologically related to ha"yyuk:k, or "people of the mountains" (Lipp,1991: 1) . The territory inhabited by the Mixe is some 5,829 square kilometers in the southeastern region of the state of Oaxaca (Lipp, 1991: 1). Etched into a piece of the southeastern mountain range is a region known as the Mixe district, it is subdivided into seventeen parts, and sustains a total population of 85,722 (age five and over) (INEGI, 2000).

The district is overwhelmingly agrarian, as seventy-seven percent of the total working population (of 31,614 persons) are agricultural workers (INEGI, 2000). And with 15,034 hectares planted with coffee, the Mixe district is the fourth in Oaxaca with regards to the total amount of surface area dedicated to the crop[1]. Ecologically, this is a fairly temperate zone (ranging from 1,200 to 2,000 meters) with mixed forests, though a great deal of the lands are under cultivation. Within this zone, the Mixe demarcate hot, cold, and temperate microenvironments. The progression between these microenvirons are abrupt and marked by dramatic changes in terms of both the plant life and temperature (Lipp, 1991:1).

Within the eastern municipality of Sanitago Zacatepec, the community of San Juan Metaltepec is less than two hundred kilometers from the city of Oaxaca (see appendices IV and V for maps of the district and municipality). It has a total population of 895 people, 886 of whom are native to the community, according to the 2000 national

[1] Pochutla has the largest area planted, with 35,523 hectares, then Teotitlan (21,853 hectares) and Juquila (19,367) (INEGI, 1997: 19).

census[2]. Ninety-nine percent of the population (age five and over) speaks their indigenous language. Moreover, seventy-nine percent also speak Spanish. Not surprisingly, it is a farming town, with eighty-nine percent of the community's economically active population working in the primary sector (INEGI, 2000).

San Juan Metaltepec is organized around a central plaza that is flanked on each side by the church, the elementary school, the municipal hall, and the *bodega* (the communal warehouse for coffee production). Outwards from this core are scattered wooden and concrete houses. Most of the households (88 percent) have electricity, but almost all (96 percent) use firewood for cooking; 45 of the 171 households have a television, only six have a refrigerator, and five have a vehicle (INEGI, 2000: n.p.). While this reflects a certain amount of "disposable income" in the community, very few households earn enough money for more expensive items.

The name Metaltepec can be roughly translated to mean "on the hill of metate" (metate is derived from metlatl and cerro - or hill - from tepetl) (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 16). A *metate* is the flat stone that is used for grinding maize. There is not any written documentation about the earliest inhabitants of Metaltepec. However oral history states that the fist settlers came from Tlahuitoltepec, which affirms the community's Mixe heritage (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 17).

The earliest records of San Juan Metaltepec go back to 1548, and John K. Chance has interpolated that the population of the community at the time was 460 (Chance, 1989: 60). By 1703, the population would reach its lowest point on record, with only 129 people remaining, and while there is no official record as to why this dangerous decline

[2] It is possible that the population is actually higher than what the census reports. Humberto Sanchez Cruz has recorded a total population of 1,556 (1984: 7).

occurred, the infamous tales of disease, violence and migration born out of colonial contact seem feasible explanations (Chance, 1989: 60). From that point on the community has gradually, but consistently, rebuilt itself.

There is an active ritual life in Metaltepec, including ceremonial practices and the sacrificing of domestic animals to ensure a good harvest, to heal the sick or to remedy familial problems (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 18). The two largest fiestas for the residents are tied to Catholic traditions, one being *Concepción* (December 8th) and other being San Juan's Day (June 24th). I attended San Juan's fiesta, and it entails turning the public space of the central basketball court into a place where for several days, musical performances and dancing, fireworks and drinking are the order of things[3].

As mentioned earlier, Metaltepec is carved into the steep sides of the Sierra Norte. At an elevation of 1520 meters, the town is suitably positioned for coffee farming[4]. While each household relies on the subsistence agriculture of maize, beans and squash, almost everyone also grows coffee as a cash crop (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 12). The Mixe are swidden cultivators, and so the surrounding mountain range is checkered with the patterns of different levels of growth and recuperation (Lipp, 1991: 15). For some lucky members of the community, the farm lands are located near town, but others must trek for six hours or more before reaching the *campo* (fields) – and this applies as much to the maize fields (*milpa*) as it does for the cafetales. When lands are located this far away, families build small cabins where they can stay during planting and harvest times.

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[3] Be it mescal or beer, drinking is an activity primarily reserved for men.

[4] The Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (INEGI) reports that within Mexico, the ideal altitude for growing arabica coffee is between 900 and 1,300 meters above sea level (1997: 1). Lower heights may be too tropical to sustain the vulnerable cherry, while higher elevations may be too cold for the fruit to mature.

Land in Metaltepec, and in many other Mexican indigenous communities, is held in common (*"comunero"*) (Otero, 1999). While some land is designated for public service (including the school grounds and church lands) and housing is considered personal property, the rest is communal. The inhabitants only "possess" the land inasmuch as they use it. A farmer may adopt land as a form of temporary property, but if it is left for three of four years without being used then others may begin to make claims on it. However, there is an inheritance system in place, in that lands may be passed down within a family as long as they continue to work it (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 20). Moreover, no inhabitant has the right to sell any of this land. The growing population of the community likely indicates of why some families are forced to travel increasingly farther distances in order to reach areas they might cultivate.

While ninety percent of the households in Metaltepec have male heads, there is a shared distribution of work and responsibility in the family (INEGI, 2000). According to Frank J. Lipp, although

> the division of labor according to gender is clearly delineated, the number of tasks shared by both sexes exceeds those allocated to only one gender. Men do most of the agricultural work, but they are assisted by women in the weeding, harvesting, graining, and storing of maize. Both sexes also share in the harvesting and preparation of coffee beans, attending to the pigs and poultry, gathering of firewood, sewing, housekeeping, marketing, and carrying of loads.
>
> (Lipp, 1991: 6)

However, one key difference in terms of the gendered division of labor is that only men are enlisted to perform the *tequio*.

The *tequio* is a form of public service whereby a man is expected to work for the community in a variety of capacities (from construction work to road reparations), a cargo, or "burden", he must carry for a year. This duty has implications for the entire

household, in terms of how the others will manage their domestic responsibilities. In one case, a woman I spoke with was having difficulties processing all of the coffee harvest that year because her husband was busy with the *tequio* and her older children had all left Metaltepec to work in Oaxaca City. This means that she will be forced to sell her coffee at a much lower price than she normally would.

Other economic activities in Metaltepec include ranching cattle, donkeys and sheep, as well as raising chickens and turkeys. There are also weekly markets in the nearby towns of Zacatepec and Ayutla, as well as few *tiendas* (general stores) in the community. But all of these endeavors are of secondary importance as compared to coffee-growing (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 13). Ninety-five percent of the coffee that is produced in the community is exported, while the other five is for the personal consumption of the inhabitants (Sanchez Cruz, 1984: 43).[5]

The residents of Metaltepec began cultivating coffee around 1920. Despite the lack of government support at this time, the crop was still useful to community largely due to the fact that it is a plant that does well in their mountainous environment, and more importantly, coffee is well suited to their pre-existing subsistence agricultural cycle (Beaucage, n.d.: 22). In Metaltepec, and the rest of the Sierra, the *milpa* is planted in late spring (between the end of March and early April) and harvested by the end of the rainy season (between November and January) (González, 2001: 140, 148). Coffee, on the other hand, is planted in early summer as the rains arrive, and is generally harvested as

[5] Coffee is consumed ubiquitously in Metaltepec. There is always a large pot near the fire keeping the watery drink warm. While at first it was surprising to see even small children enjoying the brew, it became clear that socializing around bowls of "weak" coffee (with powered milk if one was fortunate) was a part of daily life.

the maize season ends, between December and March, depending on the altitude of the cafetal.

When I asked the farmers why they grow coffee, eight of the ten replied explicitly in terms of the crop's usefulness in supporting the family, and that it is their source of cash. One middle-aged respondent, with a wife and four children, stated, "it is the only product that sustains us, there is no way, no other means but coffee"(July 14, 2002). An unmarried woman in her thirties replied, "my father also worked in the cafetales, it's the only way to get money for the family"(July 16, 2002). While a twenty-seven year old, married woman answered, "to make a little money... nothing more" (July 16, 2002).

These responses demonstrate that coffee has a pragmatic value for the inhabitants of Metaltepec. In order to understand the economic context of this community, the significance of coffee production as a cash crop cannot be underestimated.

The Nature of the Bean: The Process of Coffee Cultivation

Before we examine some of the other statements offered by the people interviewed in San Juan Metaltepec, it might prove useful to better understand the work that they do. I asked each campesino about the process of planting, tending and harvesting coffee. The following section is a compilation of their responses so that we might have a general sense of how these campesinos earn their livelihood.

Early in the summer, when the rains are falling heavily, the producers begin to plant new coffee. Saplings may have been intentionally sprouted from a farmer's best seeds earlier in the spring, or he (or she) may simply transplant the new growth that has naturally occurred in the cafetal. It is then time to prepare the land for a new year, and the

following step is to "clean it" (*limpiar*) by clearing the ground around the trees from any debris that may have accumulated since the previous harvest. It requires an average of two weeks to clean one hectare of land.

The next stage entails applying compost (*abono*) which is usually done in early July. CEPCO has launched a campaign to teach the farmers how to make a fertilizer from coffee bean pulp, however not all of the farmers have adopted this practice. But those who do place a bucket of the pulp slightly up hill from the tree so that the rains will wash it into the ground. CEPCO is also encouraging the practice of terracing the cafetales, whereby the land slightly uphill from each tree is cut away and the earth is built up to create a ledge between the plants.

Figure 3.0 A regular cafetal

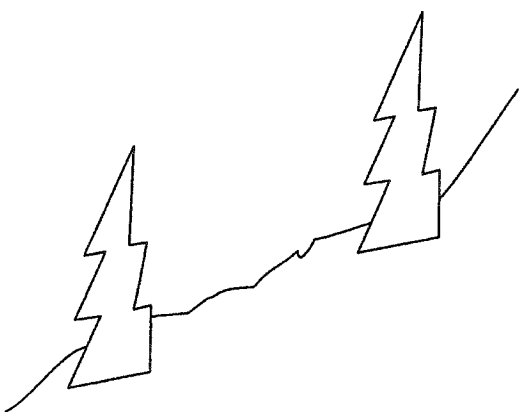
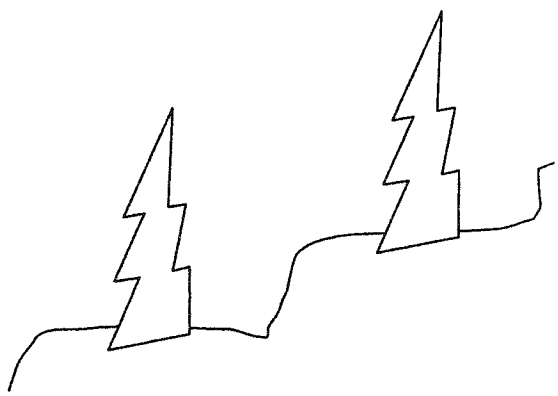


Figure 3.1 A terraced cafetal



This is useful both in concentrating the productiveness of the compost and in terms of keeping the trees well watered.

However, practices such as terracing and applying compost, while helpful in increasing the productivity of the cafetal, also increase the amount of time a farmer must spend there. This time and labor simply may not be resources that a campesino can afford, be it due to the demands of other crops (particularly maize and beans), the *tequio*, or because the farmer is also occasionally working in Oaxaca City on construction or road maintenance crews in order to supplement his income.

Another key element that each interviewee emphasized regarding the maintenance of a cafetal is the provision of shade for the coffee trees. Moreover, shade grown coffee provides the unique opportunity of reaping the benefits of a variety of other trees – a distinct advantage for small-scale farmers. In other words, fruit trees such as mamey, banana, and avocado are often planted in the cafetales. While those crops are not economically useful, they do contribute to the households' private consumption.

Another popular shade tree is the *guanjinicuil* (*Inga guinicuil*) since, while it does not offer any edible product, it can reach heights of three or four meters after only four years (González, 2001: 205). As they grow older, these trees provide a great canopy well above the coffee, protecting the crop below from strong winds or sudden freezes. Moreover, because the *guanjinicuil* sheds its leaves every six months, it can reduce the growth of weeds or grasses (making cleaning the cafetal somewhat easier) in addition to helping retain the humidity of the soil (González, 2001: 206).

The time for harvesting depends on the climate of the cafetal. Once the cherries are a dark red or deep yellow (depending on the strain) it is time to begin. However, the fruit does not ripen uniformly, and the trees on the edge of the cafetal, with the most access to sunlight, are ready first. Harvesting is a particularly labor intensive process, and

usually involves the entire family (or hired youths and other temporary workers if the campesino can afford it). Ideally only the ripe cherries are picked and placed in a basket or hollow gourd. Indeed, a signature of arabica coffee is that it is hand picked when ripe, ensuring the optimum flavor and body. However, this means returning to pick the same lands, and even the same tree repeatedly, clearly slowing the pace of the gathering.

The following stages of depulping, fermenting, washing and drying the coffee are the final aspects of the process for the campesinos. These steps have been outlined in greater detail in chapter two (see "Considering the Coffee Commodity Chain"). Indeed these stages are the most crucial for the producers, in that once the coffee has been processed as *pergamino*, they are able to sell it to CEPCO. Still, this transformation of a mountain of cherries into the sacs of coffee beans ready for sale is a labor intensive one.

Imagine walking for a few hours along a path winding down the Sierra. The trail grows increasingly narrow, but just before it becomes too crowded and steep for a mule to pass, just before you actually reach the shady, cool oasis of the cafetal, there lies an enormous concrete patio. It seems completely out of place even though it is clearly the site where freshly washed coffee will be laid out to dry. This place is located perfectly between town (from where the concrete would have been transported) and the river (the source of water for mixing up the cement) that winds along the valley floor. Just the labor required to prepare the infrastructure for processing coffee is impressive.

Near the patio is a small cabin. It is empty except for a depulper. This tool is less than one square foot large. Now try to imagine passing thousands of cherries through this tiny mill. The wheel must be constantly turned so that the fruit's fleshy pulp is pulled away from the two tiny seeds inside. These are the moments are make up coffee

production in Metaltepec and thousands of other communities around the world. This is the work of the small-scale farmer. Let us then return our attention to them and consider what a few have to say about growing coffee, the value of organic certification and CEPCO's role in their lives.

Conversations about Coffee: The Producers Speak

At this point I will briefly describe the interviewees in order to contextualize the range of their responses and to emphasize that the variables of gender, age, as well as economic and political influence do not necessarily upset certain patterns that emerge from their responses. I have chosen to keep all of their names confidential so that they could speak freely about CEPCO, the crisis and other issues that are affecting their livelihood throughout the interviews.

Of the ten people I interviewed while in Metaltepec, seven were men and three were women. I was rather fortunate to speak with those women, for while coffee-growing is generally treated as a male domain in the literature (Mace, 1998, Magnuson, 1999, Sick, 1993) they demonstrated that women too are directly affected by the coffee crisis and are implicated in its outcome. Of the three women I spoke with, one woman was "in charge" of the coffee in her family, another's husband was busy with the *tequio* that year, and the third was a healer, unmarried, and grew coffee for the same reasons offered by the male heads of households – for the money.

The men I interviewed ranged in age from twenty-seven to sixty-five. They also varied in their economic and familial contexts. Some lived with their extended families, while others has more nuclear households. Some lived in concrete houses (one man even

had tile floors) while others had smaller wooden dwellings. They also differed in terms of their relative prominence in the community. I interviewed a political official as well as individuals who are very active members of CEPCO, including Metaltepec's producer union representative. They serve as an interesting contrast to the people who work with CEPCO on a more informal basis (as well as a few who work both with CEPCO and coyotes)[6].

In fact, nine of the ten interviewees worked with CEPCO, and only one was a *productor libre* (free producer) who was working strictly through *coyotes* rather than the organization. Moreover, three of the people have been working with CEPCO since 1995, when the organization first came to Metaltepec. Between all ten of the farmers, the average amount of land dedicated to coffee production was 3.6 hectares. This places them among the other 73,373 producers in Mexico who work with between two and five hectares; They represent twenty-three percent of Oaxaca's coffee farmers (Aranda Bezaury, 1992: 106).

Upon my arrival in Metaltepec, I was hoping to speak with both organic coffee farmers and those who are not, so that I might understand the incentives to making the move to farming organic coffee. However I soon learned that in this community the issue was not one of who was growing organic and who was not, but rather who was officially certified (or making the transition towards certification) and who was continuing to produce what is known as "pure" or "traditional" coffee. Not so much as a single farmer in Metaltepec was using chemical fertilizers, pesticides or other agro-industrial inputs

[6] As stated in chapter two, affiliation with CEPCO does not guarantee a producer's exclusivity, and (s)he may still sell part of a harvest to *coyotes*. This can occur when a family is not able to process the beans to the extent that the organization requires (i.e. *pergamino*) or when *coyotes* are offering a higher price for the crop.

(even when such products were being distributed by the government through INMECAFE, after 1970). This is because of the inordinate expense of such additions, not to mention the fact that they are heavy and awkward to use on the remote cafetales cut into steep mountainsides. Furthermore, it was evident that there is a real degree of pride involved when the producers expressed that they had always been *puro natural* (pure).

Needless to say, my questions had to shift from a focus on who was "organic" and why, towards an examination of the reasons for being certified as such. This seemingly slight shift of focus actually reveals much about how the producers are responding to the coffee crisis. When I asked each respondent if they were farming organic coffee, they all said yes. And when I inquired as to if they were certified, they all again replied that they were (other than the *productor libre* of course).

However, four of the nine producers that are working with CEPCO reported that they were currently earning 9.5 pesos per kilo, which indicates that those individuals were in fact not fully certified yet (and entitled to 11.5 pesos per kilo) but rather are in the process of transition. CEPCO uses this transitory price in order to make the conversion worthwhile to the farmers, to encouraged the shift and to provide an incentive towards attaining and maintaining certified organic status.

I asked the producers why they would seek organic certification and their answers confirm the pragmatics of coffee farming in Metaltepec. Some of the explanations included statements such as,

> "because this is the only coffee that still holds a price".
> (July 13, 2002)

> "Ah well, because organic coffee is what gives us a little better of a price, it is what more or less sustains us in everyday life... because if when you sell coffee...conventional or traditional coffee, yes, it is very low right now".

(July 14, 2002)

> "Well, since we began with the organic coffee the prices for coffee are very low. [Organic] coffee earns a little more".
>
> (July 16, 2002)

It is significant here that the final quotation indicates a sense that the move towards certification is what has lowered the price of traditional coffee. This individual is articulating a concern with the lack of options available to the residents of Metaltepec. Given the significant difference between the value assigned to certified coffee versus that which is not, the idea that maintaining the status of certification as the only way to make production worthwhile is not so far-fetched.

Moreover, it becomes clear that for the interviewees there is little distinction between the motives for certifying their cafetales and the reasons for joining CEPCO's program. It is currently the only organic coffee program in the town, and so asking why the producers would join the organization reveals very similar incentives. When I asked why they had joined CEPCO's organic coffee program they replied,

> "Well, they had a higher price".
>
> (July 13, 2002)

> "Okay, the cultivation of coffee is completely affected by the low price at the moment and the people right now do not desire to work with coffee, because the truth is that it is a lot of work, is very costly... and it also requires money, now to clean [the land], to cut down the coffee, to carry it, the fermentation, the patio, drying it takes time, it is a lot of time and it is a lot of work. Because of this, many people, well maybe those who are not organic... it is a work that does not serve anymore, it does not respond anymore, to work with traditional coffee is to work in vain".
>
> (July 14, 2002)

After responses such as these, I was curious as to why the *productor libre* was opting to work independently of CEPCO. That farmer reasoned,

"Ah well, maybe because it is a lot of work...and the problem with coffee is that there is no price for it, but if they [CEPCO] have many projects, much aid, many openings in the organization, then yes I would like to enter it".

(July 16, 2002)

This producer is articulating that membership in CEPCO can be "a lot of work", while also identifying a desire for outside support. This raises an interesting dilemma. To remain uncertified is to "work in vain" and yet seeking organic certification through a producer union may not be the cure-all that it first appears to be. I asked each of the producers working with CEPCO if they had had any problems with certification and there was a more varied set of answers. Part of this may be due to the fact that certification is not a stable status, but is subject to repeated validation.

Every two years the campesinos must have their lands inspected by an independent agency (such as CERTIMEX, Mexico's certification body), which is coordinated by CEPCO. Given that certification has such great implications for the income these farmers are able to generate, the possibility of losing the title, while not a common occurrence, is certainly a cause for concern. This vulnerability is evident in some of comments following my inquiry into the challenges of obtaining and maintaining certified status.

"...sometimes they do not immediately give the certification, a flaw instantly taints the certification. Then we won't qualify".

(July 12, 2002)

"...At first it was difficult because we had to present forms and work on more or less all of CERTIMEX and all of the inspectors conditions. CERTIMEX gives us the conditions and it was difficult to fulfill them all, but right now it is more or less okay".

(July 13, 2002)

"Yes it is difficult enough... because the certifiers give standards, if one does not meet the standards or the rules then they punish us and take away the certification.

It is because of this that we have to do the work".
(July 14, 2002)

"No, there aren't any problems"
(July 16, 2002)

"No, because the work is the same, the thing is to work!"
(July 16, 2002)

In one case, a producer first stated that indeed there were problems, however when I asked as to what sort of issues he meant, he changed his mind and replied that there were not any difficulties with the certification process. Evidently, there is a range of opinion on the matter of how accessible organic certification really is. It should be noted that those respondents who did feel that the transition was challenging focused their comments towards the national certification agency (CERTIMEX) and the independent inspectors rather than at CEPCO.

It may be that CEPCO has explained that without these outside agents, they cannot sell the coffee (or pay for it for that matter) as organic. However, it is also possible that some were reluctant to direct their critique so close to home. I inquired about CEPCO in two directions, first asking about whether joining the organic program has affected the way that cultivate coffee. Many responded that it had not, and those who did notice a change mentioned differences in terms of technical points such as composting or the availability of equipment.

Membership in the program is confirmed on a yearly basis, with each harvest. This, like the impermanence of certification, implies that CEPCO can not be assumed to be a consistent source of support. And so my next question was whether the campesinos

felt that joining CEPCO had benefited them in any way. This unearthed a range of sentiment towards the organization. For example,

> "Yes it helps, but now we are doubting because... we needed a lot of money for the school and there was no help with anything, so in this moment we need support... they advance us so little, they still give a very low price...We are getting into the organic because when we give it to the organization they pay a little more afterwards and this is what we want. Like right now we will register [for school] in August, otherwise there is no help for our children to buy their school supplies and lots of other things like the uniforms. We feel bad because at this moment there is nowhere to take the harvest, but if they could help us..."
>
> (July 11, 2002)

> "Yes CEPCO has affected me because they have told me to do things I don't want to – like for example composting is a lot of work and my cafetales don't need it... [*And as for benefits?*] There is economic support... well look, CEPCO helps us as an advisor, nothing more."
>
> (July 12, 2002)

> "Yes, I'd say a little – they help us a little with money and a little with other materials".
>
> (July 14, 2002)

> "Okay, right now they give us programs, give us tools, CEPCO supports us, helps us to some extent. Yes you could say they benefit us...if we say we need a water pump or if we say machete for clearing...then there is an advantage...".
>
> (July 15, 2002)

> "Sure, the money! [*Anything else?*] Nothing more than with coffee".
>
> (July 15, 2002)

> "Well, we participate in meetings and courses about cultivating the cafetal".
>
> (July 16, 2002)

These responses indicate a certain gap between CEPCO's mandate (to "fight for a better life") and what these members perceive the organization to be. We must acknowledge, for example, that some of these campesinos have twenty, thirty, and even forty years of experience working with coffee. And so, while the provision of machetes or other materials is useful, there are clearly other elements of the program not being

embraced. Moreover, it would appear that some members would like to see CEPCO move beyond this technical work towards a more active role in local economic development projects or the provision of credit so that the community might work in that capacity independently[7].

The organic coffee program is clearly not just about the minutiae of farming in Metaltepec. As the sole source of income remaining in the region for these families, coffee is inescapably connected to educating children, to managing practices such as the *tequio*, to a household's overall economic security. The magnitude of this condition is understood by CEPCO, and yet the above comments suggest that the inherent pragmatics of the context are being lost in the translation to action.

Between Discourse and Practice: The Site of Organic Coffee Production

The campesinos I spoke with in San Juan Metaltepec have confirmed that the greatest incentive fore making the transition to organic coffee production is the sheer economic advantage of it. It is first and foremost a more lucrative endeavor. Comments such as "I don't like using chemicals" or " we know fertilizers damage the earth, so we all work naturally" were not necessarily uncommon (Interviews, July 16, 2002). But clearly the great motivator is price.

And yet the organic coffee discourse in Mexico is one that centers upon the themes of the environment, social justice and indigenity - not in a way that reflects the producers own priorities, but rather in a way that fits within the market's niche. CEPCO

[7] One man I spoke with stated that he would rather work with UCIRI (a Oaxacan coffee producer union based in the Isthmus) than CEPCO. This was impossible due to the impractical nature of travelling to the extreme south-east region of the state on a monthly basis for meetings, but it indicates that some residents are aware of, and interested in, other organizations operating in Oaxaca.

must operate from a position whereby this discourse is employed to tap the conscience market. These politico-ideological elements are directed outwards, in order to lend the organization the authority to legitimately make an appeal to consumers. The dilemma is that these elements have not proven to be entirely embraced by the small-scale farmers who are most affected by the coffee crisis, CEPCO, and the demand for organic products.

While CEPCO claims to represent the small-scale indigenous producer as they work for a better life, those very people have articulated concerns about the lack of options available to them, the challenges presented by organic certification, and their need for more support. One can certainly appreciate the difficulties in the struggle to ameliorate the living conditions of Mexico's rural poor, and it would be absurd to expect a single organization to single handedly "fix" a whole spectrum of social, political and economic issues that affect farmers such as those in San Juan Metaltepec. Moreover, there were a significant number of comments that indicated that CEPCO's organic coffee program in San Juan Metaltepec is a crucial resource and valued by the community.

What is of concern here is that the organic coffee discourse is working to obscure the potential for a more meaningful engagement between the member and the organization. As much as CEPCO needs the marginal, indigenous campesino, and as much as that farmer may need an organization such as CEPCO, there is a disconnection between their respective agendas[8]. It is a relationship marked at once by potential mutual gain and shared exasperation. If technicians grow frustrated by a lack of interest in composting initiatives, then producers may be equally irritated by being told how to do

[8] James Ferguson describes disconnection as an active relationship whereby the subaltern are excluded from the "global economy"; the concept highlights unequal power in economic relationships even though globalization "presents itself as a phenomenon of pure connection" (1999: 238).

what they have been doing for generations. It is just a small example, but this type of situation illustrates the ambivalence of their relationship. This disconnection may ultimately prove to have significant implications for the success of CEPCO's (and other groups – be they private or collective) organic coffee program.

Let us conclude this case study with the comments of two particularly eloquent campesinos. They have summed up the great irony of being at once a coveted, symbolic icon, yet marginal and struggling small-scale indigenous producer. Their words serve as powerful reminders of the fact that these issues are not simply matters of abstraction or fuel for intellectual debate. They tap the core of organic coffee production, in all its complexity – marking the source of challenges and possibilities in the lives of farmers trying to make a living in Oaxaca's northern Sierra.

> "I think that CEPCO is mobilizing and CEPCO pities the suffering campesinos. But [a CEPCO official] conceals things and does not tell the whole truth, he conceals things, comes to take things because that is the custom of the Spanish. They may think I'm a bastard but I am *indio* one-hundred percent. I'm Mixe... and I want you to take this message".
>
> (July 12, 2002)

> "The life of the coffee-grower is a little sad, but this is the thing, that coffee dropped a lot and right now almost no one wants [traditional] coffee... it is for this reason that we are pushing for fair markets".
>
> (July, 14, 2002)

Chapter Four: Conclusions

Coffee is turning out to be quite a cosmic issue...
- Russell Greenburg (1996) in
Pendergrast (1999: 389)

Oaxaca, Mexico, is a vibrant place, rich in botanical and cultural diversity. The practice of coffee growing in rural, indigenous communities has long been a part of the state's history, and likely a part of its future. But in light of the current coffee crisis, producers have been forced to find new ways to make the custom sustainable. One prominent response has been the transition towards the production of certified organic coffee, particularly through independent producer unions such as *La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café* – CEPCO. CEPCO's growing membership and their swelling numbers of certified producers, testifies to the widespread appeal of this tactic. Indeed, the farmers may not have many other options available to them.

The complex interaction of various levels of economic change have shaped today's crisis. National economic polices have supported the liberalization of Mexico's markets and signaled the demise of the nation's institutional support for coffee producers (INMECAFE). This event, coinciding with the abrogation of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) exacerbated the situation for rural farmers. In addition, the instability of the global economy has left many small-scale coffee growers shouldering the burden of capricious markets and plummeting prices. And yet in Oaxaca, this crisis has created a space where independent producer unions have been able to mobilize and work their way up the commodity chain, searching for new ways to increase their position in the production process and access new levels of control and fiscal power.

This crisis in the global coffee market is seriously affecting the economic security of small-scale coffee farmers in Oaxaca. And yet the cataclysm has provided both private companies and independent producer unions alike a degree of leverage as they compete to appeal to the moral and political sympathies of consumers in wealthy countries. The organic coffee discourse provides the foundation for this new and growing conscience market. It works to sustain an imagined relationship between producer and consumer, potentially redefining the terms of trade for historically exploitative crops such as coffee.

The discourse is woven out of the threads three main themes: environment, social justice, and indigenity. The icon of this discourse is the small-scale indigenous producer – as she or he is assumed to embody and represent the struggle to uphold these values. This has created a bizarre situation whereby various groups are actually working against one another in order to aid and represent the marginal farmers in rural Oaxaca. The situation serves to underline the potent symbolic value of the producer's identity, but has it proven to ultimately benefit them?

In the community of San Juan Metaltepec, CEPCO's organic coffee program has been embraced – however, the reasons for this are not convincingly portrayed by the organic coffee discourse's constructions, but rather due to its economic advantage. It is a pragmatic decision in a context that does not offer many other choices. This is not to say that the organic coffee discourse is an illusory fabrication, but its themes take on new meaning when the campesinos of Metaltepec explain their motivations.

First of all, consider the theme of the environment. One example is "shade grown" coffee, which is particularly desired in the conscience market. This is due to the sense that shade grown coffee, while of high quality, also provides rich grounds for

migratory birds and other creatures and generally contributes to a region's bio-diversity significantly more than plantation style, "sun-coffee" (Kirk, 2002: 37). Yet from a more pragmatic position, shade-grown coffee is advantageous to farmers because it retains the soil and its nutrients, and opens up the land for multi-cropping, hence increasing returns for the family. The issue then, is in fact organized around poverty and subsistence strategies.

Perhaps the greatest point is that all of the producers in Metaltepec are already "passive" organic farmers in that they do not use any chemical fertilizers or pesticides, but many are now seeking the seal of certification because of the increased income it signifies. Again pragmatics elucidate this context. They have not used such inputs for reasons such as disliking chemicals, let alone the prohibitive cost and additional labor they require. And as for the themes of social justice and indigenity – they move well beyond the discursive regime - this is the stuff of everyday life for the community. In a very real sense, the politics of Oaxaca's rural, marginal indigenous producers are articulated through the pragmatic struggle to improve their living conditions as best they can.

Organic certification is the crucial aspect of this context. It is the point of reference for both producers and consumers in the politics of authenticity and authentication. Both are engaged in a dynamic of legitimizing their mutual extraction of value. There is an impressive infrastructure of certification and labeling to assure the consumer that the product is authentic (that is, produced by the rural poor in an environmentally sound manner). Much work is required to ensure that these are legitimate candidates on the conscience market.

For the producers, the authentication of their work as organic assures them both the economic leverage of a higher price and the security of knowing that the price is fixed. However, access to this authentication is riddled with paperwork, meetings and frequent inspections. Given all of this, it becomes clear as to why a potential scandal, as outlined in the preface, might occur. And why, for that matter, it upsets the sensibilities of a conscience market consumer. Just the possibility of feigning certification threatens to undermine the authenticity of not only the coffee (as organic, with all of the symbolic value this entails) but also the imagined, supportive relationship between producer and consumer. The unspoken agreement is disturbed, suggesting that this imaginary connection be in fact ridden with power imbalances that the farmers could resist. Surely not a nice thought for someone who imagines that his or her purchase is an act of moral and political solidarity!

Two points emerge from all of this. Firstly, the disconnection between the pragmatism of marginal producers and the discursive leanings of CEPCO is problematic. If such a producer union was operating from a position whereby campesino pragmatism was embraced and incorporated into their programs rather than veiled by the need to represent the product and producer according to the demands of the conscience market, it would be more useful to both parties. The possibility for increasingly relevant and community motivated projects could emerge, closing the gap between member and organization – the parties working together to both improve their place in the global market and make that work meaningful and advantageous in the local community.

Moreover, it should be noted that in a climate where organizations and private companies are competing to represent the small-scale coffee producers in Oaxaca,

campesino pragmatism implies that the most useful or beneficial program will be the one to attract recruits. CEPCO's organic coffee program's success depends on its ability to do what it claims it wants to – to fight for a better life for those individuals.

Secondly, we must return our attention to the consumer and the power of the conscience market. While this market strives for just working conditions and environmentally sound agricultural practices, it is also the place where the obscuring discourse is valued. And yet the moral and political motives behind this discourse are genuinely concerned with the plight of producers. Perhaps if consumers were aware of the pragmatics of organic coffee production, and could integrate that as a source of symbolic valuation, a shift in discourse might encourage a change in action. This would free organizations like CEPCO from the demands of discursive legitimacy so that they might operate more pragmatically too. At each stage, from consumer to producer, there is potential for making the process of organic coffee production more useful to small-scale farmers....

While globalizing forces have actualized the crisis faced by contemporary coffee producers, they have also created a new awareness of the dynamic between producer and consumer and the forces that bind us. Increasing interest in, and communication between, the different levels of the coffee commodity chain have presented the opportunity for each and all to demand better terms of trade. These contradictory and faceted forces, while illustrating the perils of the global market, may yet prove to seed the ground for new possibilities.

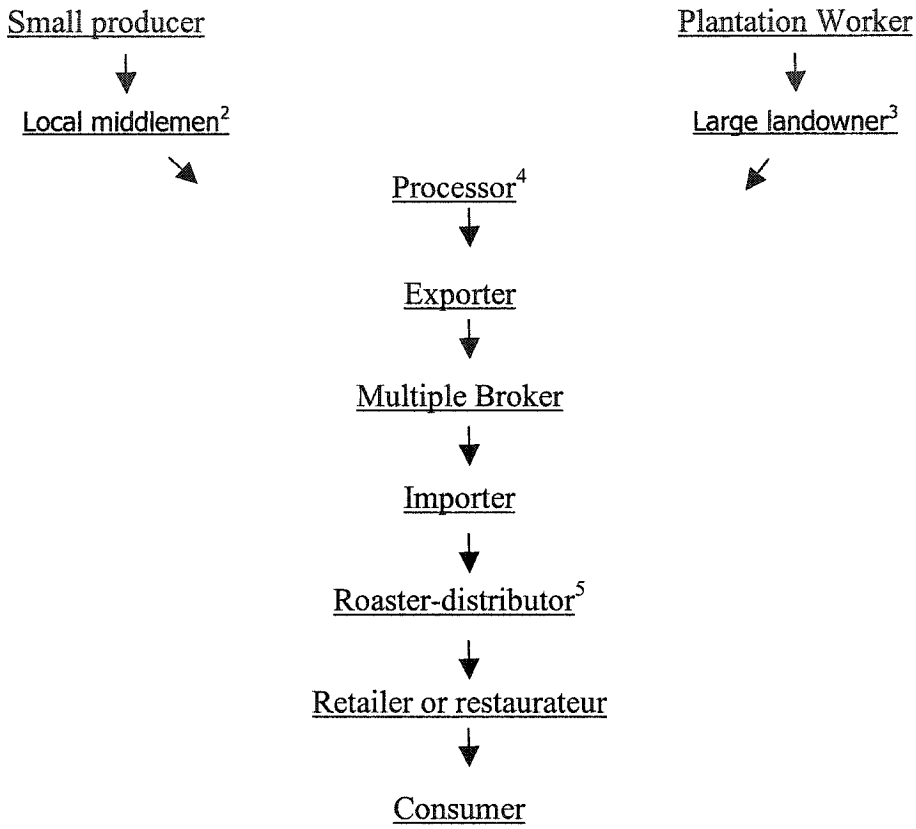
If the idea of implosion reveals anything about global coffee trade, it is that within the niche of the conscience market, the symbolics and economics of exchange bring

producers and consumers closer together. Both are mutually implicated in the success of the conscience market, to continue its development and to ensure that it realizes the most basic goals of making trade fair.

And if new niches of agency and identity are key characteristics of this implosion, as well as the re-organization of the globalizing economy (Tsing, 2002: 468), then perhaps a niche market characterized by the desire to support marginal, indigenous producers can be a platform from where to shape this transnational economic system. A place from where new political priorities might be articulated, where caricatures of commerce and iconoclastic imaginaries are rejected in favor of more meaningful, and more importantly, more useful relationships between those who produce the bean, and those who desire it.

APPENDIX I[1]

The Conventional Coffee Path
From coffee tree to cup



[1] As seen in Waridel, 2002: 43, 64.

[2] There can be more than one level of intermediary trader.
[3] Large landowners most often have their own processing plants.
[4] Coffee must be shelled and classified prior to export. Some coffee processors export directly, others are linked to multinational corporations in importing countries.
[5] Typically, coffee companies roast, package and market their coffee.

The Fair Trade Organic Coffee Path
From coffee tree to cup

Producer

↓

Cooperative/Producer Union

↓

Importer

↓

Roaster-distributor

↓

Retailer or restaurateur

↓

Consumer

APPENDIX II

Organic Coffee Certification Criteria

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) serves as an umbrella organization for 700 organic certification organizations all over the world (Waridel, 2002: 129). IFOAM sets the global standard for organic agriculture, and while it does not actually conduct inspections itself, it accredits the affiliated members who certify lands in various countries.

For a farmer's land (and product) to be certified as organic, it must adhere to IFOAM's general standards in addition to the more specific criteria put forth by the inspecting agency. Only the general principles, recommendations and standards that are related to organic coffee production will be included below[1], a full description of IFOAM's "Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing" is available at their website (www.ifoam.org).

SECTION B
General Principles, Recommendations, and Standards:

1. The principal aims of organic production and processing

Organic production and processing is based on a number of principles and ideas.
They are all important and are not necessarily listed here in order of importance.

- To produce food of high quality in sufficient quantity.
- To interact in a constructive and life-enhancing way with natural systems and cycles.
- To consider the wider social and ecological impact of the organic production and processing system.
- To encourage and enhance biological cycles within the farming system, involving microorganisms, soil flora and fauna, plants and animals.

[1] As seen in Waridel, 2002: 130 – 137.

- To develop a valuable and sustainable aquatic ecosystem.
- To maintain and increase long-term fertility of soils.
- To maintain the genetic diversity of the production system and its surroundings, including the protection of plant and wildlife habitats.
- To promote the healthy use and proper care of water, water resources and all life therein.
- To use, as far as possible, renewable resources in locally organized production systems.
- To create a harmonious balance between crop production and animal husbandry.
- To give all livestock conditions of life with due consideration for the basic aspects of their innate behaviour.
- To minimize all forms of pollution.
- To process organic products using renewable resources.
- To produce fully biodegradable organic products.
- To produce textiles which are long-lasting and of good quality.
- To allow everyone involved in organic production and processing a quality of life which meets their basic needs and allows an adequate return and satisfaction from their work, including a safe working environment.
- To progress toward an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible.

2.Genetic Engineering

General Principles:
Genetic engineering has no place in organic production and processing.

Standards:
2.1 Certification bodies/standardizing organizations shall set standards and make every effort, including relevant documentation, to ensure that not genetically engineered organisms or products thereof are used in organic production and processing.

(...)

4.Crop Production

4.1 Choice of crops and varieties

General principles:
All seeds and plant material should be certified organic.

Recommendations:
Species and varieties cultivated should be adapted to the soil and climatic conditions and be resistant to pests and diseases.

In the choice of varieties genetic diversity should be taken into consideration.

Standards:
4.1.1. When organic seed and plant materials are available, they shall be used. The certification body/standardizing organization shall set time limits for the requirement of certified organic seed and other plant material.

4.1.2. When certified organic seed and plant material are not available, chemically untreated conventional materials shall be used.

Where no other alternatives are available chemically treated seed and plant material may be used. The certification body/standardizing organization shall define conditions for exemptions and set time limits for any use of chemically treated seeds and plant materials.

4.1.3 The use of genetically engineered seeds, pollen, transgenic plants or plant material is not allowed.

4.2 Length of Conversion Period

General Principles:
The establishment of an organic management system and building of soil fertility requires an interim period, the conversion period. The conversion period may not always be of sufficient duration to improve soil fertility and reestablish the balance of the ecosystem but it is the period in which all the actions required to reach these goals are started.

Recommendations:
The length of the conversion period must be adapted to:
-the past use of the land
-the ecological situation.

Standards:
4.2.1. Plant products from annual production can be certified organic when the standard requirements have been met for a minimum of twelve month before the start of the production cycle. Perennial plants (excluding pastures and meadows) can be certified at

the first harvest after at least eighteen months of management according to Standards requirements. Pastures, meadows and their products can be certified after twelve months of organic management.

Where the certification body/standardizing organization requires a period of three or more years of documented non-use of prohibited materials, certification may be granted twelve months after application.

4.2.2. The conversion period can be extended by the certification body/standardizing organization depending on, for example, past use of the land and environmental conditions.

4.2.3. The certification body/standardizing organization may allow plant product to be sold as "produce of organic agriculture in process of conversion" or a similar description, when the Standards requirements have been met for at least twelve months.

4.3. Diversity in Crop Production

General Principles:

The basis for crop production in gardening, farming and forestry is consideration of the structure and fertility of the soil and surrounding ecosystem and to provide a diversity of species while minimizing nutrient losses.

Recommendations:

Diversity in crop production is achieved by a combination of:

-a versatile crop rotation including legumes

-an appropriate coverage of the soil for as much of the year as possible with diverse plant species.

Standards:

4.3.1. Where appropriate, the certification body/standardizing organization shall require that sufficient diversity is obtained in time or place in a manner that takes into account pressure from insects, weeds, diseases and other pests, while maintaining or increasing soil organic matter, fertility, microbial activity and general soil health. For non-perennial crops, this is normally, but not exclusively, achieved by means of crop rotation.

4.4. Fertilization Policy

General Principles:
Sufficient quantities of biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin should be returned to the soil to increase or at least maintain its fertility and the biological activity within it.

Biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin produced on organic farms should for the basis of the fertilization program.

Recommendations:
-Fertilization management should minimize nutrient losses.

-Accumulation of heavy metals and other pollutants should be prevented.

-Nonsynthetic mineral fertilizers and brought-in fertilizers of biological origin should be regarded as supplementary and not a replacement for nutrient recycling.

-Adequate pH levels should be maintained in the soil.

Standards:
4.4.1. Biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin shall form the basis of the fertilization program.

4.4.2. The certification body/standardizing organization shall set limitations to the total amount of biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin brought onto the farm unit, taking into account local conditions and the specific nature of the crops.

4.4.3. The certification body/standardizing organization shall set standards which prevent animal runs from becoming overmanured where there is a risk of pollution.

4.4.5. Manures containing human excrement (feces and urine) shall not be used on vegetation for human consumption, except where all sanitation requirements are met. The certification body/standardizing organization shall establish sanitation requirements and procedures shall be in place which present transmission of pests, parasites and infectious agents.

4.4.6. Mineral fertilizers shall only be used in a supplementary role to carbon-based materials. Allowance for use shall only be given when other fertility-management practices have been used.

4.4.7. Mineral fertilizers shall be applied in their natural composition and shall not be rendered more soluble by chemical treatment.

The certification body/standardizing organization may grant exceptions which shall be well justified. These exceptions shall not include mineral fertilizers containing nitrogen.

4.4.8. The certification body/standardizing organization shall lay down restrictions for the use of inputs such as mineral potassium, magnesium fertilizers, trace elements, manures and fertilizers with a relatively high heavy-metal content and/or other unwanted substances, e.g. basic slag, rock phosphate and sewage sludge.

4.4.9. Chilean nitrate and all synthetic nitrogenous fertilizers, including urea, are prohibited.

4.5 Pest, Disease and Weed Management Including Growth Regulators

General Principles:

Organic farming systems should be carried out in a way which ensures that losses from pests, diseases and weeds are minimized. Emphasis is placed on the use of crops and varieties well-adapted to the environment, a balanced fertilization program, fertile soils of high biological activity, adapted rotations, companion planting, green manures, etc.

Growth and development should take place in a natural manner.

Recommendations:

Weeds, pests and diseases should be managed by a number of preventative cultural techniques which limit their development, e.g. suitable rotations, green manures, a balanced fertilization program, early and predrilling seedbed preparations, mulching, mechanical control and the disturbance of pest-development cycles.

The natural enemies of pests and disease should be protected and encouraged through proper habitat management of hedges, nesting sites, etc.

Pest management should be regulated by understanding and disrupting the ecological needs of the pests.

Standards:

4.5.1. Products used for pest, disease and weed management, prepared at the farm from local plants, animals and microorganisms, are allowed. If the ecosystem of the quality of organic products might be jeopardized, the Procedure to Evaluate Additional Inputs to Organic Agriculture and other relevant criteria shall be used to judge if the product is acceptable. Brand name products must always be evaluated.

4.5.2. Thermic weed control and physical methods for pest, disease and weed management are permitted.

4.5.3. Thermic sterilization of soils to combat pests and disease is restricted to circumstances where a proper rotation or renewal or soil cannot take place. Permission may only be given by the certification body on a case-by-case basis.

4.5.4. All equipment from conventional farming systems shall be properly cleaned and free from residues before being used on organically managed areas.

5.5.5. The use of synthetic pesticides is prohibited. Permitted products for plant-pest and disease control, weed management and plant growth regulators may be found in Appendix 2

4.5.6. The use of synthetic growth regulators is prohibited. Synthetic dyes may not be sued for cosmetic alternation of organic products.

4.5.7. The use of genetically engineered organisms or products thereof is prohibited.

4.6. Contamination Control

General Principles:

All relevant measures should be taken to minimize contamination from outside and within the farm.

Recommendations:

In case of risk or reasonable suspicion of pollution, the certification body/standardizing organization should set limits for the maximum application levels of heavy metals and other pollutants.

Accumulation of heavy metals and other pollutants should be limited.

Standards:

4.6.1. In case of reasonable suspicion of contamination the certification body shall make sure that an analysis of the relevant products and possible sources of pollution (soil,

water, air and inputs) shall take place to determine the level of contamination and take measures accordingly.

4.6.2. For protected structure covering, plastic mulches, fleeces, insect netting and silage wrapping, only products based on polyethylene and polypropylene or other polycarbonates are allowed. These shall be removed from the soil after use and shall not be burned on the farmland. The use of polychloride-based products is prohibited.

4.7. Soil and Water Conversation

General Principles:
Soil and water resources should be handled in a sustainable manner.

Recommendations:
Relevant measures should be taken to prevent erosion, salination of soil, excessive and improper use of water and the pollution of ground and surface water.

Standards:
4.7.1. Clearing of land through the means of burning organic matter, e.g. slash and burn or straw burning, shall be restricted to the minimum.

4.7.2. The clearing of primary forest is prohibited.

4.7.3. Relevant measures shall be taken to prevent erosion.

4.7.4. Excessive exploitation and depletion of water resources are not allowed.

4.7.5. The certification body shall require appropriate stocking rates which do not lead to land degradation and pollution of ground and surface water.

4.7.6. Relevant measure shall be taken to prevent salination of soil and water.

(...)

APPENDIX III

Prices Paid to Coffee Growers in Mexico, in U.S. cents per lb (Arabica) [1]

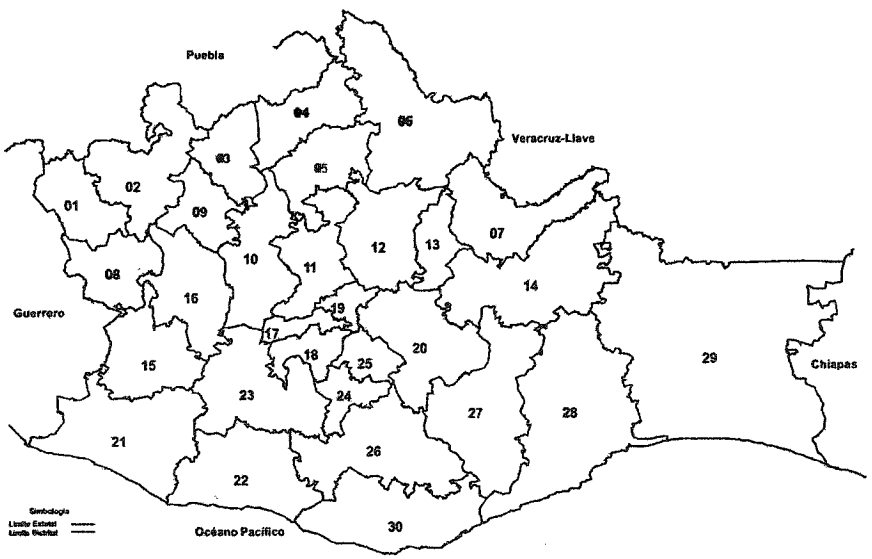
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year Avg.
1982	98.12	82.78	80.4	79.23	77.82	76.41	74.99	46.63	51.98	65.22	65.22	65.22	71.33
1983	46.74	48.51	51.14	58.12	56.15	54.25	52.51	50.84	49.23	68.21	66.28	64.39	55.53
1984	74.18	72.17	70.41	68.64	66.81	65.34	79.34	77.46	75.74	79.19	82.08	80.22	74.3
1985	77.99	76.35	82.22	82.24	80.78	78.51	73.63	61.69	59.25	81.63	77.34	71.71	75.28
1986	121.74	108.51	100.29	94.01	87.92	82.67	78.59	71.26	65.23	95.53	89.38	83.61	89.9
1987	75.47	70.58	66.06	62.17	58.23	54.77	52.12	49.54	47.09	84.4	79.9	67.11	63.95
1988	61.59	60.51	59.78	59.78	59.78	59.78	59.78	59.78	59.78	94.4	94.4	94.4	68.65
1989	93.84	92.65	91.5	90.31	89.13	88.03	86.96	85.89	84.85	43.25	46.23	47.51	78.35
1990	54.12	60.07	67.83	67.32	67.15	62.07	60.13	67.92	68.27	65.97	58.99	63.95	63.65
1991	61.75	63.09	62.94	78.76	75.08	73.21	70.61	69.4	75.77	69.45	66.24	64.63	69.24
1992	66.65	57.57	59.84	44.94	40.36	37.44	33.98	30.74	31.84	41.08	46.07	69.75	46.69
1993	64.85	64.84	57.64	51.45	52.76	57.49	61.27	62.37	67.22	72.21	74.6	76.17	63.57
1994	71.91	75.89	72.4	77.88	90.01	109.58	174.38	161.05	155.17	165.16	175.05	149.2	123.14
1995	171.36	169.12	168.75	206.45	186.85	170.53	156.6	165.75	149.65	133.82	126.58	123.59	160.75
1996	141.65	134.43	131.59	98.6	99.36	97.24	n/a	n/a	n/a	133.83	135.02	135.46	123.02
1997	124.35	157.46	139.79	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	124.58	126.03	133.63	134.31
1998	123.99	106.43	102.56	106.73	105.97	98.75	n/a	n/a	n/a	88.39	77.76	100.11	101.19
1999	96.68	93.54	90.84	78.03	78.2	82.67	82.51	60.33	68.29	62.68	85.09	91.97	80.9
2000	89.42	85.24	78.53	73.45	66.12	63.72	57.58	58.02	51.52	51.75	47.01	46.58	64.08
2001	47.71	54.29	59.17	54.12	55.79	54.93	52.5	51.13	52.8	57.5	54.95	52.81	53.98

[1] As seen at www.ico.org (with yearly averages added by the author).

APPENDIX IV

Map 2.0: Oaxaca by District[1]

Key	Name	Key	Name
01	Silacayoápam	16	Tlaxiaco
02	Huajuapan	17	Zaachila
03	Coixtlahuaca	18	Zimatlán
04	Teotitlán	19	Centro
05	Cuicatlán	20	Tlacolula
06	Tuxtepec	21	Jamiltepec
07	Choápam	22	Juquila
08	Juxtlahuaca	23	Sola de Vega
09	Teposcolula	24	Ejutla
10	Nochixtlán	25	Ocotlán
11	Etla	26	Miahuatlán
12	Benemérito Distrito de Ixtlán de Juárez	27	Yautepec
13	Villa Alta	28	Tehuantepec
14	Mixe	29	Juchitán
15	Putla	30	Pochutla

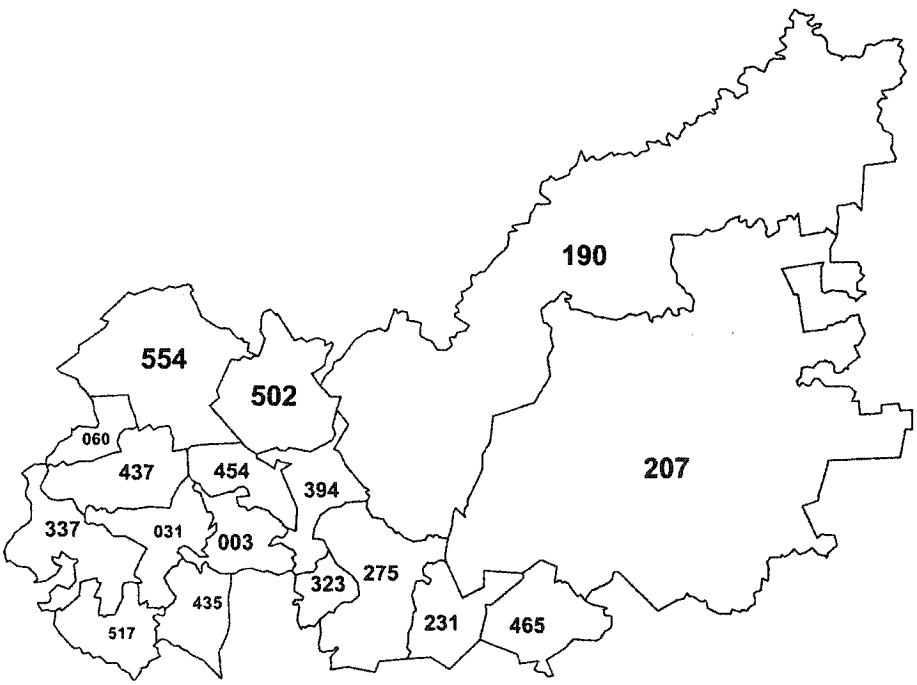


[1] Source: INEGI.

APPENDIX V

Map 2.1: The Mixe District, by Municipality[1]

Key	Name
003	Asunción Cacalotepec
031	Tamazulápam del Espíritu Santo
060	Mixistlán de la Reforma
190	San Juan Cotzocón
207	San Juan Mazatlán
231	San Lucas Camotlán
275	San Miguel Quetzaltepec
323	San Pedro Ocotepec
337	San Pedro y San Pablo Ayutla
394	Santa María Alotepec
435	Santa María Tepantlali
437	Santa María Tlahuitoltepec
454	Santiago Atitlán
465	Santiago Ixcuintepec
502	Santiago Zacatepec
517	Santo Domingo Tepuxtepec
554	Totontepec Villa de Morelos



[1] Source: INEGI.

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