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Unruly Clients

A Study of How Bureaucrats Try and Fail
to Transform Gatekeepers, Communists and
Preachers into Ideal Beneficiaries



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Gatekeepers, Communists and Preachers into Ideal Beneficiaries**

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To my parents



"I consider that some of us do not function satisfactorily. Not all of us are as motivated as we should be. I agree with you that the relationship between settlers and the institution could be improved considerably.... I do not know whether you are right or not to blame the IDA for the problems you have been listing. I am relatively new in the institution so I was not present when all these events you mentioned took place. However, I should stress that since I chose to be a functionary of the IDA, I have the moral obligation to defend the principles and objectives of the institution".
(Front-line worker responding to the criticisms of a peasant leader; this thesis)

*His thought is redneck,
yours is doctrinal
and mine is deliciously supple
(Eagleton on Ideology, 1991)*

2000

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Preface

Writing the preface of this thesis gives me both a sense of fulfillment and dissatisfaction. Fulfillment because of finishing a job which proved to be more lasting and absorbing than I could ever have imagined. Dissatisfaction because it is not easy to part with a work that has become so much an element of my everyday life. I realize that this thesis embodies an intellectual journey characterized by unending attempts to make sense of a multitude of conversations, situations and events I experienced, while conducting field research in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica.

Regarding the writing process I must say that I have become convinced of the fact that theories are highly powerful in making some aspects of social life invisible, thereby making us - social scientists - potentially connivant in the production of a discourse which may serve to repress the aspirations and commitments of those we write about. In that sense theories might evolve into tools which can be used in ways which run against our views. One way to avoid this, I think, is to interweave into the account the contrasting views and interpretations of the people who have to cope with our research problem on an everyday basis. This, I think, is the main contribution of an actor-oriented approach. Let me give a short example.

When attempting to develop a model about face-to-face relationships between farmers and bureaucrats I once visited a peasant leader with a self-made theory about the effects of certain types of relationships between farmers and extensionists upon the quality of extension. He listened patiently, then laughed and asked me whether I really believed in that explanation. Sensing that I was imposing some kind of self-serving logic upon an evidently very conflictive social reality I responded that naturally relationships between bureaucrats and farmers were underpinned by a long history of struggles in which a various social actors, such as the fruit multinationals and a variety of institutions and agencies, played a role, and that I was aware that this relationship had been characterized by considerable violence and repression. Upon hearing this comment the peasant leader responded that he liked this explanation much better and that he had been surprised to hear me talk in the language of bureaucrats.

Thus, applying some extension model to a complex social reality would not only have meant concealing the 'darker sides' of state-peasant relations but also becoming an accomplice in attempts to depoliticize what in reality are fundamentally political struggles. The objective of the thesis, then, is not that of engaging in a discussion on how to improve the practice of intervention, nor to make 'scientific' judgements about the efficacy of intervention or the relationship between planning models and implementation structures. Rather this thesis attempts to shed light upon the relationship between certain types of intervention thinking and institutional practices of social control. Indeed, I hope that it will be easier for practitioners to recognize their own dilemma's in an ethnographic work rather than in an approach which is intent on developing methodologies for 'managing' participation.

In this thesis state-peasant relations are studied by analysing the social strategies bureaucrats and farmers deploy when dealing with state intervention. I did field research in two settlements in a colonization and banana plantation area at the 'frontier'. Yet, the thesis is not about life in the frontier, although I hope that through the ethnography appearing in this book some idea of it will be conveyed. Also, little

Preface

mention is made of household structure and community life. But these were not my research themes. I am aware that women are under-represented in this study. However, introducing gender in the analysis would have required a fundamental critique of the male-centred character of most intervention thinking. This I think is a very promising area for future research.

I owe much to many people in writing this thesis. To begin with I wish to thank the officials of the Neguev settlement in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica for putting up with me for such a long period (June 1987 through December 1988). On the side of the settlers I encountered admirable persons. The moral courage and strength of Rigo Gutiérrez, Juan Hernández and Juan José Herrera inspired me during the writing up of the thesis. Ricardo Hall was not only highly perceptive but also a caring friend. He probably does not agree with my analysis. They and many others played a formative role during the writing of the thesis.¹

I am very grateful to Abelardo Delgado, Walter Robinson, José Salazar Navarrete and Marco Vinicio Cordero who introduced me to the intricacies of the IDA. David Kauck was a fine and hospitable friend. Monique and I shared with Leila, Angel and Alán many pleasant moments drinking *cuba libre* on the terrace of their house, where we lived.

The Programa Zona Atlántica of CATIE/AUW/MAG provided me with financial and logistical support during the fieldwork period. I wish to thank Dr. Jan Wienk and Henk Waayenberg for their support. I guess that Jan was right when arguing that Ph.D. students develop egocentric features. Dr. Louk Box in his capacity of representative of the sociology department and chairman of the Costa Rica Werkgroep was most helpful. Without Fernando and Olga life in Guápiles would have been much more difficult. Monique and Annette Selten did a wonderful research job in distant frontier communities. They opened windows on the everyday reality of men and women there. Jeroen Huizing and Willemien Brooymans were witnesses of many of our anxieties and joys in Costa Rica.

The support of other Ph.D. students here in Holland was important. The advanced seminars organised by Professor Norman Long provided a useful arena for discussing theoretical issues. The discussions with Dr. Alberto Arce and Gerard Verschoor provided me with plenty of fuel for going on with writing. Gerard and Horacia Fajardo were most helpful in the last, and most hectic, stage of the research. Dr. Philip Quarles van Ufford made a number of important editorial remarks. Jan Kees van Donge and Dr. Michael Drinkwater were kind enough to comment on the ethnography. Nannie Brink and Jos Michel provided crucial administrative and personal support. Ann Long did a great job correcting. She also made numerous editorial and substantial comments in the subtle and gentle way only she knows. From Norman Long, my supervisor I learnt that theory is vacuous without a sound ethnographic basis.

I wonder whether I would have brought this job to completion without the constant help and encouragement of Monique, my wife. She had to put up with my recurrent frustrations, especially the last months. Without her exhaustive commentaries the work would have been rather less consistent. This has been largely a joint endeavour in which we explored new theoretical paths.

The most beautiful event, and certainly the most energetic one, that happened to us during this period was the birth of our twin daughters, Liliana and Alicia in San José. We then could experience the kindness of the *ticos* towards children.

I doubt whether we could have coped without the help of our parents.

¹It should be remarked that the names of the actors appearing in the text have been changed.

CHAPTER 1

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO STATE- PEASANT RELATIONS

1.1 Introduction

In this book state-peasant relations in a colonization area in the Atlantic Zone of Costa are studied from the perspective of the actors - bureaucrats and peasants - involved. The approach I propose here differs from the more customary perspectives on the theme of state-peasant relations, inasmuch as I focus on the struggles surrounding particular types of state intervention and not on a regional peasant movement. I do not address issues concerning the structural (in-)capacity of the state to transform the livelihood conditions of peasants, but focus instead on the social practices by which state intervention is sustained, resisted or appropriated. One major argument of this book is that state intervention includes institutional models about how to deal with farmers, tactics for dealing with 'recalcitrant' and 'uncooperative' farmers, and strategies by which farmers cope with the state bureaucracy. It is also argued that these models, strategies and tactics are shaped in concrete and often conflictive, situations in which farmers and bureaucrats develop rhetorical and organisational skills. Thus, instead of probing into the manifest or 'hidden' rationale of state intervention, I pay attention to the discursive practices by which notions of state authority are fashioned in struggles between farmers and bureaucrats.

In this book I concentrate on how bureaucrats engage in a variety of practices for handling institutional problematics and for dealing with various groups of beneficiaries. In addition I examine the ways in which farmers deal with intervention by penetrating, obstructing and subverting the state bureaucracy and by forcing state representatives to negotiate the authority of the state. In short, I am interested in the following type of questions: How does a social worker of the land reform institute deal with a peasant leader who insists in blaming him, as a representative of the state, for the fact that the development programme he helped to initiate led to the indebtedness of a majority of the beneficiaries? How does a settler convince a credit assistant that the loss of his maize harvest was due to the rains and not because he spent the credit on consumer goods, or in the local canteen?

This brings us to the central issue of this thesis: that of agency and its interrelations with power.¹ I do not simply assume that bureaucrats and farmers differ in that they have unequal access to (state) power, but I attempt to show how capacities to act are produced, reduced and obliterated by farmers and bureaucrats who deploy certain tactics, strategies and models. Agency, in this account, is not merely a characteristic of the individual but the outcome of social struggles in which some actors attempt to enroll others in their 'social projects'.²

Various sets of social actors appear throughout the book as I discuss the contrasting ways in which intervention issues are strategically handled. It should be stressed, however, that this does not mean that they represent a given class, category or professional group. Their appearance in the text responds to a different line of argumentation: that of showing the kaleidoscope of bureaucrats practices of intervention and farmers' strategies for coping with intervention by accomodating, resisting or accomodating to it. What the protagonists of this study have in comon is that they were involved, as implementors or (would-be) beneficiaries, in the attempts of the Costa Rican Land Development Institute (IDA) to carry out a colonization programme in the Atlantic zone. By that token they became participants within wider political and administrative struggles concerning the nature, aims, and efficacy of planned state intervention.

In short, let me first explain what this work does not endeavour. It does not attempt to contribute to the discussion on why, when and in what ways which sectors of the peasantry indulge in forms of revolutionary or collective action.³ Neither am I interested in proposing better, or improved modes of state intervention based on 'scientific' knowledge. In focusing on the real-life dynamics of intervention and its appropriation by farmers I intend to contribute to a critique of normative models of intervention which are so popular in the academic literature.

More concretely my research aims were:

1. To produce an ethnography in which the models, strategies and tactics comprising practices of state intervention and farmers' intervention-coping are central.⁴
2. To develop an alternative theoretical approach to the study of state-peasant relations, viewed in terms of the social practices by which various sets of social actors

¹See for innovative views on 'agency' Strathern (1987), Fardon (1985), Inden (1990). It seems that 'agency' is becoming an important analytical theme in the social sciences. Thus Strathern argues that "agency refers to the manner in which people allocate causality and responsibility to one another, and thus sources of influence and directions of power" (1987;23). Whereas Strathern chooses to study differences in cultural conceptions of agency Fardon focuses on its representation in anthropology and Inden on the construction of complex agents such as the state.

²See Clegg (1989) for a cogent discussion of the conceptualization of power in various theoretical approaches. Callon, Law and Latour draw upon recent post-structuralist views on power when developing a 'sociology of translation or enrollment' (see Callon, Law and Rip 1986, and book edited by Law 1986).

³Existing studies on state-peasant relations have given rise to highly theoretical frameworks and sweeping generalizations as to how, why and under which historical conditions peasants rebel (see Paige 1975, Wolf 1969, Hobsbawn 1965, Barrington Moore 1969 and Scott 1976; for an interesting critique of the logic of causality implied in these theories see Knight 1990). I took the view, however, that focusing on everyday situations and events does not yield less dramatic material for understanding state-peasant relations than the study of large peasant movements.

⁴By practices of intervention I mean the techniques and theoretical tools used for conceptualizing and measuring 'development problems', for institutionalizing intervention activities, and for targeting, reaching and servicing intervention subjects such as "peasants", the "poor", etc. When talking about intervention-coping strategies I refer to strategies designed by farmers/beneficiaries in order to deal with state intervention, such as accommodation, resistance and manipulation.

(such as institutional managers, farmers, front-line workers and interested outsiders) shape, appropriate and transform state intervention.

Next I provide the regional and institutional setting of the research. Thereafter a number of experiences in the field are discussed. Then, in the last part of this chapter I will outline the conceptual framework of the book.

1.2 The Regional and Institutional Setting

Since colonial times the Atlantic zone has been of geo-political importance since it belonged to an area of conflict between the colonial powers over control in the Caribbean (Sandner 1985). From the eighteenth century onwards an economy emerged, based on the production of cocoa, which developed in a typical boom and bust fashion. After Independence the Costa Rican government wished to establish a transport corridor between the coffee-producing Central Valley and the Atlantic in order to reduce freight costs of coffee and a port was established near the cocoa producing area of Matina, which would give rise to the city of Limón. In 1870, the building of the San José-Limón railroad started. During its construction, the railroad company experimented with the exploitation of tropical fruits, among them bananas, for export to North America and Europe. When bananas proved to be profitable, foreigners, as well as local small producers started to grow them. Production was sold to a USA based trading company, which would later become the United Fruit Company (UFCO). The banana industry has remained such an important element in the Atlantic zone that a short historical review is in place here. Attention is also given to colonisation processes and their consequences for land tenure.

During the first banana cycle (1890-1940) production was highly concentrated in the hands of one foreign company, the UFCO. The national producers were largely cornered into a marginal position because they lacked access to the best land and depended entirely on the UFCO for the marketing of their crops. For this first banana cycle, a rather simple social structure could be pictured, with the UFCO at the apex, exerting control over all activities in the area. Below the UFCO there existed a class of medium-scale banana producers (often foreigners). Interspersed between the plantation areas there were small banana producers. Lastly, an urban/rural proletariat existed, involved in port and plantation activities.

After 1942, the UFCO abandoned the plantations due to the devastations caused by the Sigatoka and Panama diseases (Hall 1983). This led to a collapse of the regional economy. Part of the rural population compensated for the subsequent loss in employment by starting agricultural activities. The UFCO stimulated this process by leasing plantation land to ex-plantation workers in return for symbolic payments. It also leased or sold land to national entrepreneurs who established cattle ranches of low productivity. This redivision of land laid the basis for the development of a new agrarian structure.

When the state decided to organize a resurgence of the export sector in the Atlantic zone, a second banana cycle (1970 -) started. The difference from the first banana cycle was the heavy involvement of the state during this second cycle. The state provided not only capital for the establishment of plantations (through the Plan de Fomento Bananero) but also to improve the infrastructure. The latter was done through the nationalization and modernization of the railroads, the building of new highways and electricity plants and the installation of urban services. This would increase export

earnings and tax revenues. While the state became more involved in the banana industry, the transnationals (besides the UFCO, two other companies had entered the banana-industry) became less involved. They adopted a strategy of backing out from production in areas where labour militancy, smallholder mobilizations and diminishing soil fertility narrowed their profit margins. In that case they sold their plantations to national producers and concentrated on the most fertile areas. The regional structure became characterized by a tight alliance between state, transnationals and national banana producers. The latter were accorded a cushioning function between labour organisations and plantation interests. The national planters, after an initially successful attempt to operate autonomously in the international market, once again became dependent on the transnationals for the marketing of their product. In fact, the introduction of technological innovations, required, even more than before, close vertical integration of production, processing and marketing (Ellis 1983). Decision making regarding quality control and the use of particular inputs came to be highly concentrated in the hands of the transnationals.

Colonisation and land tenure

Colonisation by native Costa Ricans began in the last century when the northern part of the Atlantic zone, the Valley of Santa Clara was cleared (Koch 1975). Although the high expectations that this would become a thriving agricultural area did not come about, several colonies were established with government support.

With the exhaustion of the 'coffee frontier' in Costa Rica in the fifties a large colonization movement developed. This process was stimulated by state policies aimed at the incorporation of unused land for productive and geopolitical purposes. These lands, located in areas unsuited to coffee cultivation, provided a safety valve during crisis periods in the coffee economy, when rural unemployment and landlessness increased explosively. Moreover, the profitability of coffee led to increasing land concentration, forcing a sector of the population to migrate to other areas. In this way non-coffee producing lowland areas became integrated into the economy under specific conditions. In the Atlantic zone the smallholder sector became an important supplier of foodstuffs for an expanding home market (especially maize, but also tubers) in the coffee regions and acted as a 'social frontier' with a large capacity to absorb surplus labour. Later, the state encouraged colonisation with the dual purpose of reducing labour costs for the export sector and decreasing land pressure in other regions in Costa Rica.

Because of state policy to promote colonisation and make remote areas more accessible, land in the Atlantic zone took on a very particular role. Its value consists of a real and a speculative element. That is, the expectation of increasing infrastructure by the state led to a considerable valorisation of land. This increase in value is prompted by the realisation that the 'physical' agricultural frontier is coming to an end. This is seen in the rapid deforestation that is taking place all over the zone.

The precise patterns of land tenure that are evolving in the region are not entirely clear, given the continuing expansion of the plantation sector. It is interesting to note that the Colombian Association of Banana Producers (BANACOL) has been buying large extensions of land for plantation purposes, also in the settlement sector. It is, however, clear that the outcome of this process depends on the dynamics of the banana economy and on the other regional actors (the smallholder sector and the economic elite) to impose their own 'social project'.

1.3 The Land Development Institute and the 034 Programme

The IDA was established in 1961 when it was called ITCO: the Land and Colonisation Institute. It has a presence in the Atlantic zone that dates back to the sixties with the establishment of land settlement and titling programmes. With regard to rights to redistribute land, the IDA's mandate was limited from the start. It had no clear prerogatives since it was the judiciary system which resolved all cases regarding land ownership. The IDA also did not have sufficient and regular funding. It therefore basically limited itself to conflict-resolving tasks in response to local pressures. It was constantly dependent on the sensitivity of the current political regime to the pressures of peasant organisations.

In the early sixties the IDA undertook two large colonization projects, those of Cariari and Bataan. In the 1970's, after realizing that colonization efforts were expensive and had little overall impact, it shifted attention to titling and the provision of services in frontier areas. In 1975, in response to increasing peasant mobilizations, it adopted a policy of establishing production cooperatives in more accessible areas. Towards the end of the 1970's it started an ambitious policy of colonization, in "development poles", adopting a comprehensive territorial approach. It must be noted that the IDA has been the target of criticism by many, and for various reasons. By peasant unions and progressive intellectuals for its inability to carry out a 'real' land reform. And, especially by other institutions, as too weak in its relation with smallholders, and unable to implement plans according to technical criteria. However, the IDA remains the front-line agency for dealing with various types of smallholder pressure groups and in that respect it has a special role in Costa Rica.

The 034 Programme I researched was funded by USAID. Its wider objective was that of restructuring the then prevailing pattern of institution-beneficiary relationship in Costa Rica by strengthening the operational capacity of the IDA. It started in 1980 and ended in 1987. The 034 Programme included the following programme components;

1. Agricultural Asset Redistribution, which included the establishment of three settlements in the Atlantic zone, in formerly invaded haciendas.
2. Increased Tenure Security, which involved cadastre and titling activities in a 160,000 hectares area of the northern part of the Atlantic zone.
3. Strengthened IDA Administration, which included introducing a data management system for activities such as adjudication, credit, titling, beneficiaries and programme evaluation.

The total budget of the 034 Programme consisted of \$9,500,000, out of which \$3 million were destined as a revolving Credit Fund. The 034 Programme was the response to a prolonged period of sometimes very explosive land occupations in the '70's. The three settlements included in the programme, of which Neguev with 5,340 hectares and 310 beneficiary families was the oldest, were set up as centres of concentrated state directed activity. This involved the development of infrastructure (roads, schools, electrical service, etc.), and the establishment of production-related services (credit, extension). It was expected that the growth effects of these settlements would radiate towards the non-serviced areas.

The "style" of the programme was distinctively top down: it was predominantly directed to the enforcement of state presence in order to regain political initiative in the region. Although the settlement project was explicitly intended to find viable livelihood alternatives for a large sector of smallholders, the programme exhibited from the

beginning problems at both the planning and implementation levels. By the end of 1983 the Credit Fund had run into its first crisis; Loans given for planting cassave in the Neguev settlement could not be repaid, due to marketing problems. By 1986 it was clear that the agricultural development projects in Neguev, those of cocoa and animal husbandry, were due to become a disaster. It is telling that no evaluation of the Credit Fund has been released since 1984.

What is interesting of the O34 Programme is that it signalled the introduction of the integrated rural development model in the IDA, coupled with an attempt to reorganise the institute by carrying through a drastic decentralization to the regions. This entailed that a new approach to the 'land question' be adopted, one geared to eliminating prevailing 'paternalistic' state practices, and to transforming peasants into entrepreneurial farmers⁵. This should have been achieved through a comprehensive approach including titling, the provision of land and credit and extension to landless peasants. An important instrument for achieving this goal was to be an effective beneficiary selection system⁶. However, these attempts to reorganise the IDA's mode of operating encountered much resistance within the institute⁷. Due to these conflicts

⁵The project also included as one of its goals that of helping the 'poorest of the poor'. Interestingly, in a 1984 mid-term evaluation, serious doubts were expressed as to the compatibility of this goal with that of transforming settlers into entrepreneurial farmers. As the evaluators put it, "We are not certain it is possible to design a project that will really help most of the 'poorest of the poor' become, overnight, progressive commercial small farmers" (1984:79).

⁶In fact, before starting the O34 Programme a detailed anthropological analysis was undertaken by researchers contracted by USAID of topics such as client-institution relations and 'the impact of titling and land provision on peasant attitudes' (see the unclassified project paper 'Agrarian Settlement and Productivity', published in 1980). In this analysis we find ample examples of what can be designated academic labeling. Thus Seligson (1980) is quoted as having found that "the cardinal personal qualities of squatters are high cynicism (low trust in government) and a high sense of personal efficacy (having one's actions noticed); the combined qualities produce 'alienated activists'" (Annex II.D. p.28). Such forms of 'academic labeling' provide the rationale for advocating a meticulous beneficiary selection system. This preoccupation with beneficiary selection became the first focus of attention for USAID planners and already at an early stage attempts were made to enhance the effectivity of the selection procedure. Thus it is stated in the same document that "Perusal of a large number of ITCO Selection Cases turned up the following rejects: those with family incomes over C1,500, families with less than four members or with a family labour force of less than two ...", but also, "troublemakers; bachelors or single women without family obligations; those known to be lazy or poor workers; individuals who lived away from their plots or who lived elsewhere; alcoholics; individuals in violation of the law; and those already *precaristas* (squatters) elsewhere". The authors congratulate themselves for the progress achieved in bringing about an effective beneficiary selection system, "Although some exceptions are made on humanistic (sic), common-sensical grounds, the scrupulousness with which ITCO investigators perform their detective work, combined with the improvements it is making in the calculation of man/land ratios and land-use assessment, augurs well for a more suitable, rationally chosen clientele.

⁷Although programme documents are very careful concerning the formulation of the third Programme component, that of Administrative strengthening, it is clear that it was USAID's purpose to reorganise the whole institute. Thus a USAID funded mid-project evaluation undertaken in 1984 states, "IDA's new Administration may want to consider reorganising the whole institution so that the technical units (accounting, beneficiary selection, valuation, legal, etc.) understand that their primary role is to support the regional staff, which is carrying out IDA's programmes" (p.47). In reality, this attempt at institutional restructuring encountered heavy resistance in the IDA, especially on the part of the then Executive President (Don Antonio Salgado), for reasons which are discussed in chapter 2. Thus by 1984 only 16% of the funds allocated to that component had been spent. The same evaluation report asserts with regard to support by the IDA management, "Overall, IDA management has usually been supportive of the Project. However, it sometimes took 3 months for the former President (Don Antonio Salgado) to return a call or answer an urgent memo asking for a decision" (p.3).

programme implementation suffered a considerable delay. As of 1984 only 37% of total programme funds had been spent. In order to speed up the programme a Programme Advisor (Don Roberto Arcos) was employed, who from then on was in charge of programme management. This led to a clash with the previously appointed Project Director who resigned in 1986. Ultimately, by 1987, the O34 Programme had ended as a failure with a very high level of indebtedness among settlers⁸.

1.4 Laying out the Research Problem

As argued the O34 Programme was considered to be of special importance by the USAID planners as its wider objective was that of restructuring the prevailing mode of intervention of the IDA. USAID and some IDA functionaries aimed through this programme to bring about radical administrative reform within the land reform institute and consequently to transform the existing pattern of relationships with the settler clientele. These relationships were considered too particularistic and to offer too many opportunities for what the planners called 'clientelism', and more blatant types of 'corruption'. In the view of experts, these were major obstacles to carrying out efficiently the development tasks of the institution.

The O34 IRD Programme began seven years before and was at the point of finishing when I arrived in Costa Rica at the beginning of 1987. The first task I set myself was to undertake an organisational overview of the IDA. After an initial round of interviews with the heads of the various departments and regional units of the agency, I gained the impression that, on the whole, state functionaries were a bunch of friendly people with good intentions but with very limited knowledge of what colleagues in other departments were doing. In fact I was surprised by the contrasting descriptions of the content of tasks and the contradictory ways in which the institutional problematic was expounded by department heads. I found that not only was there an incredible amount of task duplication but also that some departments were not doing what they were supposed to do and encroached upon the tasks of other departments. Moreover, it appeared that some departments, sections or units maintained special relationships with client groups in several parts of the country; and it soon became clear that a number of conflicting political agendas played an important role in the functioning of the institution.

It was not surprising then that I found little correspondence between the organizational chart and the actual departmental functioning of the agency. However, few people (besides me) bothered about that, and a recurring explanation given to me during the two years of my field research was that the chart in use was outdated and that a new one was in preparation. Nor did the institute seem successful in implementing the integrated rural development model, introduced by USAID, aimed at resolving rural poverty by providing settlers with land, credit, extension services and improved agricultural methods. The model was to be designed and tested in one region

⁸It is important to note that serious doubts existed as to the suitability of most of the soils of the three settlements purchased by the O34 Programme for agriculture. Hence recommendations were issued by USAID experts to develop livestock models and to concentrate on perennials. However, the transfer of modern agricultural technology went together with major errors on the part of research institutes such as CATIE (*Centro Agronómico de Tecnología Investigación y Enseñanza*), the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) and the local extensionists.

before being replicated all over the country; yet so far the institute, it seemed, had been conspicuously unsuccessful in this effort.

A relevant question, then, became: Why was it so difficult for the institute's management to carry out this programme in spite of the ample financial and organisational support it received from USAID? Or, put differently: Why did it seem that so many people at the IDA were skeptical of, or lacked the willingness to participate in such an ambitious effort to intervene in the lives of smallholders in order to transform their production conditions? After all, if I was going to study state-peasant relations and focus on the land reform agency I had somehow to develop a view of the capacity of the agency, or its incumbents, to act on behalf of the state, while establishing good relationships with its clientele.

One way of finding some answer to this question, I thought, would be to approach those actors close to the field, namely, the front-line officials in charge of implementing the programme and establishing close relationships with the settlers. After meetings with several of them, I was immediately struck by their commitment to a distinctive intervention ideology which seemed to shape their dealings with the settlers.⁹ Especially the older agronomists, employed by the charismatic founder of the IDA Don Antonio Salgado, emphasized the necessity of 'understanding' the mentality and idiosyncrasy of 'the peasantry', which they often did in florid terms, displaying a certain tenderness towards the settlers. They also stressed an image of themselves as *generalistas* (generalists) or *empiricos* (empiricists), as professionals weary from bureaucratic desk-work and strong in establishing trust relationships with the farmers, who were not afraid of getting their hands dirty in farmers' fields. They argued that there was no point in being an expert in the latest agricultural technologies if there was no knowledge about the human capacity to apply them. This attitude went along with a strong distrust of comprehensive development programmes directed at transforming agriculture. At the same time, they were suspicious of (foreign) theories designed to establish effective modes of intervention. Instead they emphasized the need to enhance the learning capacity of the farmers and, as evidence of their view, they pointed to the success of the coffee sector in Costa Rica, a success that had been achieved with a minimum of foreign assistance and on the basis of the development of local technology.

Approaching the problematic issues in the settlement area

However this rather harmonious, though paternalistic view of the relationships between settlers and functionaries which suggested itself during the first contacts with front-line workers appeared to be of little avail when approaching in more depth the problems of the settlement area of the Atlantic zone. On the contrary, I encountered a highly politicized and conflictive situation in which distrust and mutual recrimination seemed to be more common than any form of constructive cooperation or enduring political alliance. There was in fact a high level of open conflict between local functionaries and settlers. And the discourse employed by field officials when talking about '*los campesinos*' (the peasants or settlers) was part of an aggressive ideology of intervention with little room for the development of friendly patron-client relationships.¹⁰

⁹The notion of intervention ideology will be further developed at the end of this chapter and when discussing administrative and implementation styles in chapters 2 and 4.

¹⁰The notion of discourse is a central one in this work and will be laid out fuller at the end of this and following chapters.

Neguev, the settlement where I started my research, illustrates this situation. Neguev was the first settlement where the Integrated Rural Development Programme was implemented. State intervention there was directed at stifling the attempts of a leftist peasant organisation (the *Unión de Pequeños Agricultores del Atlántico*, UPAGRA) to set up an independent power base. In fact the settlement had come into being as a result of the invasion by this organisation of a huge cattle ranch or *hacienda* called Neguev in 1978. The state responded repressively with a concerted campaign of intimidation and marginalisation of leftist peasant leaders. At the same time, settlers were offered large amounts of credit within the USAID programme. The result was disastrous, since a majority of settlers ended up heavily in debt - a pattern that was repeated at other settlements where the programme was applied. Hence the effort to streamline institutional intervention by introducing rational forms of coordination and monitoring, implied in the O34 Programme, also came to nothing. There was little evidence that institutional performance had improved; instead it appeared that previous forms of political clientelism were supplanted by a new kind of dependent clientelist relationship between the farmer and the bureaucracy. This new kind of bureaucratic clientelism in the Neguev settlement was reflected in a particular way of talking about and addressing the settlers by the officials: as an individual who had to be serviced and encouraged to become an entrepreneurial farmer. In return it was expected from the client/beneficiaries that they should comply with the prevailing policy of IDA, the Land Reform Agency. Settlers who were not ready to show compliance were labeled as troublesome and excluded from IDA credit.¹¹ It must be stressed, however, that in other settlements political negotiations still played an important role in the relationships between settlers and state agencies.

In the course of exploratory interviews with policy makers and researchers committed to the Integrated Rural Development Approach, many explanations were offered for the difficulty of implementing the O34 Programme. For example, a number of specific features of the settlement sector in the Atlantic area were mentioned, such as the relatively young age of the settlements and thus of local organizations, the diversity in social and occupational backgrounds of settlers and their differing economic aspirations and commitments to a 'peasant way of life'. This last factor was often underlined because the majority of settlers were said to be ex-plantation workers.

On the basis of such 'facts', two specific types of explanation recurred. The first related to the plantation background of many settlers. According to local functionaries, ex-plantation workers did not have much agricultural experience and thus needed special kinds of assistance. This argument was usually linked to the view that 'the plantation mentality' impeded them from becoming successful farmers, while at the same time making them vulnerable to extremist, communist influence. Also related to the argument that ex-plantation workers were troublesome (*problemáticos*) was the common view that they were inclined to become 'professional squatters' who would occupy land in order to sell it later at a profit. This assumed practice provided further arguments to those who were against the policy of distributing land through the settlement programme in the first place. I also encountered a vast literature on plantation agriculture that bolstered the idea that plantation life produces among workers a particular type of social personality characterized by being dependent on the institution and therefore lacking in personal autonomy (see, for example, Beckford

¹¹The adoption and transformation of this model of the client as an instrument of social control is analysed in chapter 3. The emergence of bureaucratic clientelism is discussed in chapter 6.

1972). And many functionaries adopted a similar cultural-psychological interpretation when explaining programme failure.

Yet, contrary to these views, I found that settlers in Neguev and other settlements had very varied backgrounds and life histories. Most came from peasant families, had worked in plantations but shared a hatred of plantation existence which was expressed in an unequivocal commitment to the autonomy of peasant life. Many settlers made clear to me that they had in the past faced, and would continue to face, the difficult decision of whether to continue a peasant life of insecure income and minimum services or to take the easier path of selling the farm and returning to the plantation. However, for the time being, many struggled on with the vicissitudes of a peasant settler life. Explanations based on the idea of some underlying cultural logic or personality type, then, simply ignored the complexities of the situation. To find a more adequate answer I would have to submerge myself in the diverse struggles taking place at the local level, in different settlements.

A second type of explanation advanced by both local functionaries and settlers was the lack of 'community' and local organization. It soon appeared that there were large differences regarding local organisation between Neguev and other settlements.

However, concerning the settlement sector at large the following can be said. Although settler leaders differed from functionaries in their opinions about the role and nature of local organizations, most of them emphasized the unwillingness of large sectors of the settlements to cooperate. One explanation given for this was the existence of competing farmers' local organisations with differing political and religious attachments. Indeed, within the settlements, there were many opposing groups, each establishing different relationships with state institutions. For example, there existed several leftist groups, and others, calling themselves 'the democrats', who received the full support of the land reform agency in its struggle against the 'communists'. In addition, various evangelical churches were expanding rapidly in the region. Alongside these more organized groups, there was a large number of small local organisations (e.g. committees set up to build or repair roads, churches, bridges, etc.). These latter were independent from particular political or institutional interests.

It also appeared that for many settlers it was less beneficial to participate in large formal organisations than in groups oriented towards the achievement of short-term instrumental goals. Small-scale projects enabled farmers to establish (political) relationships with 'patrons' within an institution, without becoming entangled in a complex web of bureaucratic relationships. Cooperation, thus, was not only an issue among settlers but also in the relationship between settlers and bureaucrats. Indeed, settlers were often able to manipulate the situation in order to create considerable room for manoeuvre for their own 'projects'. This was especially evident in settlements where several government agencies provided similar types of services, thus offering peasant groups the possibility of playing off one institution against another. It was also common practice for settlers to find their way to specific persons at higher levels in the bureaucracy in order to extract the services they could not obtain at regional level. This was especially the case before an election, when a process of political negotiations was initiated in which local leaders offered their support to a political party in return for particular goods and services. Leftist oppositional groups would enter such negotiations in order to extort concessions in return for the commitment not to disrupt the electoral campaign of the party in government.

It became clear then that the answer to the issue of 'cooperation' could only be analysed through a detailed understanding of local dynamics; the more so since it appeared that many settler organisations had developed skills in attracting and

(re)channelling the flow of administrative goods and services. And developing such lines of inquiry required identifying the critical arenas of negotiation. Such arenas might be provided by formal organizations, such as development associations, or by informal ad hoc groups formed by settlers to force the state bureaucracy to deal with a particular issue (such as the repair of a road or bridge). It also appeared that large integrated rural development projects as well as small projects initiated at the local level could easily be converted into arenas of conflict.¹²

Next I discuss a number of methodological and theoretical concepts which are central to my approach.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The analysis of events such as public ceremonies, formal meetings and informal gatherings, provide a rich source of material for analysing *discursive practices* constituting forms of labelling and legitimization on the side of front-line workers; and strategies of accommodation, resistance and manipulation on the farmer's side. Events provide the opportunity to see how various types of discursive practice are endowed with practical meaning. Thus I am not simply interested in language or rhetoric as an object of study. What attracts me is to explore the interaction between discourse and social situation, and particularly the way in which particular types of discursive practice become strategic resources in local struggles. It is in such situations that one is able to realize the power of discourse, and that discourse itself is a form of social practice.¹³

This certainly has implications for the way the ethnography is organised and the value of such textual devices as case studies and life histories. In short, I view case studies as textual fabrications by means of which we draw comparisons between, say, styles of operation, or between different ways of constructing social reality (as implied in the social construction of the 'frontier', 'community', etc). Indeed, in the first part of the book, analysis is directed to comparing managers and front-line workers' styles of operation. In the second part of the work, case studies appear which revolve around a set of problematic events, which in turn cast light on contrasting forms of intervention-coping. At the same time it should be stressed that case studies of particular persons, organised as life histories, are not mere illustrations or characteristic depictions of personalities. They, instead, have the function of showing how individuals develop styles of operation by having to confront a series of conflictive situations.

An actor-perspective also comes to the fore in the fact that the perspective changes when a new set of actors is introduced in each chapter. This does not mean that I aim to adopt their 'point of view', but that I pay special interest to their own language of explanation (see de Vries 1992 for a critique of ethnographic forms claiming to give 'voice').

¹²This is a concept central to the whole thesis. Most case studies centre around such an arena of conflict.

¹³Indeed, when talking about discourse in the course of this text I mostly mean 'discursive practice'. Thus 'officials' discourse' refers to the discursive practices bureaucrats employ in particular situations for dealing with clients, or advancing their own institutional projects. The 'discourse of public administration' refers to a particular way of speaking about, or representing, practices of governability. 'Public discourse' refers to the ways in which arguments are constructed in a debate.

Central analytical constructs

The concept of *institutional or administrative project* is central to Chapter 2, where I discuss how such projects emerge as a response to a variety of political and institutional pressures. It is argued that by focusing on institutional projects we might gain a better understanding of the complexities involved in the functioning of an institution, since they are grounded in a particular, practical understanding of institutional needs and tasks, and a determinate understanding of how relations between IDA and its (potential) beneficiaries ought to be. Furthermore, we will see that the institutional projects discussed evolve within the political framework of the *Liberación Nacional* party, and that they are the outcome of a learning process by which state managers develop a way of negotiating the demands of the central government, the political environment and the various organised client-groups. Different institutional projects may come into conflict as they cater to differing groups of institutional and political actors, and beneficiaries. The conclusion of Chapter 2, then, is that by focusing on institutional projects we obtain an understanding of the 'multiple realities' of institutional life. This in turn has major implications for our views on state activity. One major argument of this work is that in order to understand the dynamics of state intervention it is imperative to concentrate on the process of implementation. It is at that level, I argued, that the contradictions of state intervention become apparent.

In Chapter 4 I introduce the notion of *implementor's styles of operation* in order to describe the 'fragmented nature of the front-line workers' lifeworld'. It is argued that, in contrast to desk-workers, implementors are confronted with the contradictions of participating in the differing worlds of the institution and of the farmers. Implementors or front-line workers, thus, are often farmers themselves and may share the same local socio-political commitments as those of their clients. This in contrast to the 'typical' desk-top bureaucrat who finds it easier to adopt an institutional perspective. In consequence front-line workers internalize the 'ideology of state intervention' in differing ways with, as a result, the emergence of different front-line workers' styles of operation. In Chapter 4 I discuss three such styles: the bureaucratic, the 'organizing' and the political.

Notions denoting multiplicity and plurality are central to the book and are used with the purpose of providing a view of the pluriformity and heterogeneity of social reality. I do this by concentrating on differences between projects, styles, strategies, settings/domains, contexts and locales. Thus, in Chapter 2 I apply the concept of *multiple realities*¹⁴ to refer to the different faces of a given institution or social realm (the IDA), as represented by competing institutional projects struggling within a number of institutional arena's. In Chapter 4 the concept of multiple realities is used again to distinguish the differing cognitive understandings front-line workers develop about their work and which are shaped within the differing domains of the administration and the field. It is argued that these cognitive understandings play an important role in shaping their operational styles. The notion of multiple realities, then, is used to refer to 1) the different faces of institutional life and 2) in a more phenomenological vein, to the differing meanings which intervention acquires within the lifeworlds of bureaucrats.

In Chapter 3 two different social settings are distinguished in which implementation takes place: those comprising the administrative process and those

¹⁴The concept of multiple realities derives from Schutz (1962) and Luckmann and Schutz (1973), where it is used to describe how different actors accord different interpretations to the same situation or event, and thus construct differing social realities.

comprising service delivery in the field. The first type of setting I designate the administrative domain, and the latter, the field domain. It is also argued that such domains are not necessarily tied to a given physical location. Thus it is shown that the administrative process unfolds in a variety of locales exhibiting varying degrees of bureaucratic formality. In effect, some administrative locales are situated outside the 'office'. The 'field', in turn, is a metaphor for designating a variety of spaces, or locales, in which farmers are able to exert a larger degree of influence in their interaction with state officials. Such locales include the farmstead, but also public spaces in the settlements, such as the community centres.

Following Goffman (1974) and Giddens (1984), I see *locales* as spatial contexts which are associated with a particular type of social interaction. Locales play a central role in framing social behaviour, that is in providing the social settings in which specific types of topics and demands can be treated. Locales, however, are not given as such. They are shaped through the differentiated character of social relationships in time and space.

The concept of *lifeworld* shares some similarities with that of multiple realities. However, it must be stressed that the latter refers to a single social realm (i.e. the institutional, implementation or locality contexts) whereas the Schutzian concept of lifeworld refers to the lived-in or taken for granted world of social actors which cross-cut various realms. The concept of lifeworld is introduced in Chapter 4. I use it as embodying different kinds of commitments which social actors, in this case front-line workers, internalize, and which are often contradictory, if not conflictive. I show that social actors develop styles of operation for dealing with such contradictory sets of commitments deriving from contradictions between the implementation and locality contexts.

Contrary to operational styles, I argue that *social strategies* are not individual constructs but consist of social practices which are socially available. It is argued that strategies for dealing with state intervention can be studied by concentrating on development projects - large and small ones, state-initiated and farmer-initiated - which evolve as arenas of struggle between different groups of farmers and state institutions. In adopting an interpretive approach I analyse how farmers (re)-define their problems when involved in such struggles. The concept of strategy is further elaborated in Chapters 5 and 9. It suffices here to say that in the second part of the book I distinguish three different strategies for dealing with state intervention: accommodation, resistance and manipulation. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8 I contend that an intervention-coping strategy proves to be viable inasmuch as it is able to link local problems over access to resources and services with a particular way of dealing with intervention. This, in effect, entails getting a good grip of the language and concepts by which state bureaucrats exert their authority.

The concept of *discourse* is therefore central to this work. When referring to discourse, much more is meant than the language people use when talking about specific subjects. Following Foucault (1973), I see discourse as a form of (institutionalized) social practice embodying a particular conjunction between 'knowledge' and 'power'. From this point of view, authoritative representations of the development problematic are constructed which have real power-effects when deployed. Yet, for reasons which I hope will become clear by the end of this book I do not speak of a 'development' discourse as embodying modes of 'objective' knowledge and techniques of social control constituting the discipline of development. Instead, I

hold that it is possible to distinguish different types of discursive practices which relate to 'development'.¹⁵

The focus, then, is on 'discursive practice' and I distinguish three different types of bureaucratic discursive practice which are recurrent in the relationship between settlers and state officials: that of agricultural modernization, community, and democracy. Such modes of discursive practice, I argue, are inherent to specific types of state activity. What is important, then, is to study how they impinge on the way farmers define their own problematics.¹⁶

This book, however, does not deal merely with how bureaucratic or policy discourses inform and shape state intervention, and hence provide an idiom for sustaining relations between peasants and the state, but on how local actors endow such discourses with practical and strategic meaning, within certain social contexts/domains and in regard to specific problematics. This, I designate the localization of discourse. Discourse, then, is interesting inasmuch as it is expressed through discursive practice. In Chapters 5 and 9 the concepts of discourse and discursive practice are further elaborated.

The concepts of *social and knowledge interface* are discussed in Chapter 5. Here it will suffice to point out that social interface refers to the idea of social contradiction as experienced and dealt with by social actors with different social and cultural backgrounds. Following Arce and Long (1987) I argue that differentiated types of knowledge are generated within determinate social interface settings. Thus I make a distinction between the knowledge interfaces of the administrative and the field domain. Conflictive interactions within the latter domain I designate client-official interfaces.

The administrative process encompasses one part of the front-line worker's task definition, such as reporting, task-coordination, the administrative handling of farmer's cases, etc. But it also includes the informal talk and gossip of officials with different social and ethnic backgrounds. It is argued that through the social interfaces occurring in the administrative domain, front-line workers endow the administrative process with local meaning. Such a meaning-generating process, it is argued, is crystallized as practical knowledge about how to deal with beneficiaries as administrative cases, and hence leads to the fashioning of a particular model of the 'client' (as poor, uneducated, prone to clientelistic relationships). The central point, then, is that this model of the

¹⁵It should be noted that I do not hold to a realist conception of the state as an entity embodying some unified rationality or world-view. Such a historical conception of the state, I think, has the drawback of counterposing dichotomous social constructs such as state against civil society. In holding to a nominalist conception of the state I concentrate on the conceptions, organisational practices and idioms of authority exercised by certain actors in particular institutional settings and arenas. The state, then, is viewed as a shorthand for referring to a diversity of institutional projects, practices of governability and modes of legitimization, which have in common a particular language or discourse of power. When talking of state-peasant relations I, therefore, refer to the idioms and practices of intervention used in struggles and negotiations between bureaucrats and peasant/farmers. There is no assumption whatsoever that such idioms and social practices are expressive of wider social processes or structures. (See for a discussion of the theoretical implications of a nominalist conception of the state Rose and Miller, 1992, and Foucault, 1971, 'on governmentality').

¹⁶We should beware, I think, of what Eagleton (1991) quoting Perry Anderson calls the 'inflation of discourse'. Thus the degree to which bureaucratic discourses shape farmer's modes of social organisation is a subject of empirical analysis and must not be presupposed. Indeed, in the case studies I show how farmers appropriate the discourses of 'community', 'agricultural modernization' and 'democracy', within their social strategies in order to accommodate, resist or manipulate state-intervention.

'client' has real effects for farmers through practices of administrative *labelling*. I show in Chapter 3, by focusing on seemingly trivial events and emphasizing the fragmentary and discontinuous nature of the administrative process, that this model is not a cognitive construct but has more to do with the stealthy workings of ideology.

The *client-official interface* refers to conflictive relationships between officials and farmers, occurring especially in the process of service delivery in the 'field', which leads them to acquire specific knowledge about the farmers' livelihood conditions, attitudes, motivations, etc. Front-line workers are, at the point of service delivery in the field, confronted with the contradictions inherent to implementation. In consequence they are compelled to legitimize their own role and that of the institution they work for. We see then that in the client-official-interface administrative constructs (the model of the 'client') and labelling practices, appear to be quite limited as modes for exerting social control over the settler population, and that practices of legitimization, therefore, acquire a special importance.

Legitimization and labelling practices, together with the model of the 'client', comprise an *ideology of intervention*. The concept of intervention ideology is worked out in Chapters 5 and 9. In short, I see an ideology as an action-oriented set of beliefs associated with specific practices of social control (labelling, legitimization), rather than as a coherent normative framework. Ideologies are pragmatic insofar as they serve to shape an understanding of the world which is useful within particular social contexts; in the case of front-line workers that of implementation. An ideology of intervention is not so much false in that it obscures the complex reality of the farmer, but an interested simplification of the conflictive nature of state intervention. That becomes clear to the front-line worker him/herself when confronted with the contradictions of implementation, compelling him/her to develop an operational style for dealing with conflicting social and moral commitments. The force of the ideology of intervention, then, is that it is able to produce useful interpretations for the ongoing problems of implementation, as well as practical ways to handle them, yet without being able to mask the power relations underlying such problems.

Final overview

The conflicts surrounding the O34 Programme are analysed in Chapter 2. The O34 Programme stands also central in Chapters 3, 4 and 6. In Chapter 3, I examine the reality of the administrative process in the oldest of the three settlements of the O34 Programme, Neguev.¹⁷ In Chapter 4, I present three case studies of front-line workers in Neguev.

Chapter 6 discusses two kinds of intervention-coping strategies which were developed by farmers in Neguev during the implementation of the O34 Programme. Chapter 7 and 8 discuss settlers' strategies for dealing with intervention organised by the Neguev Regional Office -thus after the completion of the O34 Programme - in two settlements which did not come under this programme.

Summarizing, the principal sets of actors in this story are front-line workers and settlers/beneficiaries who are involved in the everyday struggles surrounding planned state intervention. Hence the book consists of two parts. The first (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) concentrates on bureaucracy and covers the institutional environment as well as implementation at the local level. The conclusion is that it is not possible to understand planned state intervention without examining how peasant producers at the local level

¹⁷The other two settlements are El Indio (3,200 hectares and 422 beneficiary families) and Maryland (300 hectares, number of beneficiaries unknown).

transform state policy. Chapter 5 is central to the whole argument as it addresses a number of conceptual issues regarding the relationship between the bureaucracy and people, as exemplified in knowledge interfaces and processes of administrative labelling. The conclusion is that it is necessary to develop a discourse oriented approach to the study of bureaucracy-client relations. The second part (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) discusses a few of the intervention-coping strategies that peasants wield in dealing with state intervention (accommodation, resistance and manipulation). In the conclusions to the book a review of the whole argument is presented and an attempt is made to further elaborate a number of concepts proposed in this work.

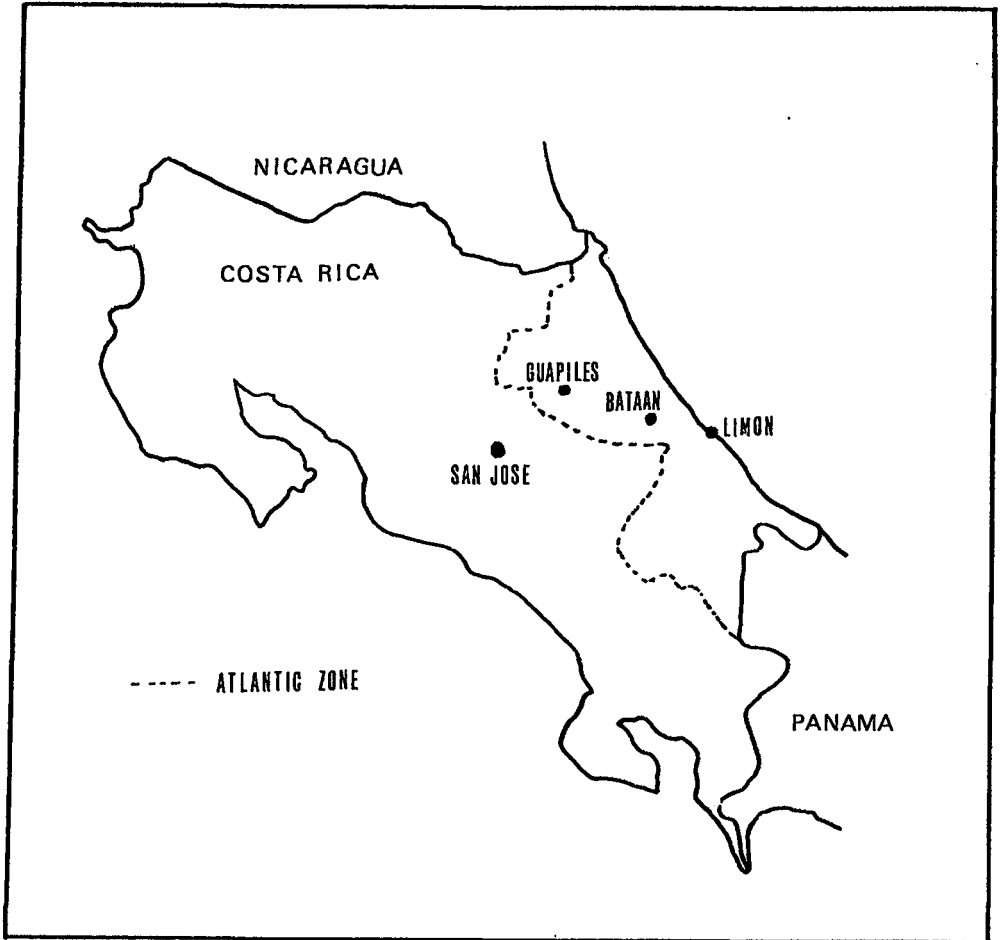


Figure 1.1 Map of Costa Rica

CHAPTER 2

LAND REFORM AND COMPETING INSTITUTIONAL PROJECTS IN COSTA RICA

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I related my first experiences with the land development institute, the IDA. The apparent lack of a fixed organisational structure was exemplified by my difficulty in getting hold of an organisational chart. I also related my first encounters with the bureaucracy and the realization that reality in the field was much more conflictive than its idealized representation by the agronomists I first met at headquarters in the capital of San José. It was not long before I was introduced to the various disputes cross-cutting the whole institution, and it appeared that the O34 Programme played a central role in these disputes.

I also noticed that the general standing of the IDA among other institutions was not very high. It was considered to be permeated by politics and corruption. Indeed, all through the research there were rumours that the central government was going to intervene in the institution because of financial irregularities. Furthermore, as we will see in this chapter, plans to decentralize the institution and make it more client-oriented, were, in most cases, successfully resisted by the IDA bureaucracy. In short, the IDA seemed to be a weak institution, full of petty rivalries and quite distanced from what it should be doing. Yet this view of the IDA appeared to be too limited, for beneath the 'petty rivalries' and accusations of 'corruption' there was a power struggle between various factions within the institution which represented contrasting institutional projects.¹

The major argument of this chapter is that the attempts to restructure the IDA through the introduction of the O34 Programme, have to be viewed within the context of IDA's previous and ongoing power struggles. It was suggested in Chapter 1 that the

¹Interestingly, an institutional analysis in terms of struggles between competing institutional styles leads to a different view of the IDA. Thus I will argue later in the chapter that such an analysis contradicts two common critical views of the institution. The first view (see Barahona Riera 1980; Araya Pochet 1982) argues that the institution was stillborn as an agrarian reform agency and that it served only to 'extinguish fires' (*apagar incendios*). According to the second view (Rovira Mas, 1987; Roy Rivera 1987) the IDA was set up as an apparatus of social control through a set of strategies of intermediation. In this line of thought the IDA is anything but inefficient. Indeed, it is seen as relatively successful in securing the reproduction of the dominant political and economic system.

034 Programme encountered much opposition within the IDA. Here I want to inquire into the social and ideological basis of this opposition. I do so by focusing on the institutional projects which had a strong influence on the functioning of the institute when the 034 Programme was introduced, and afterwards.

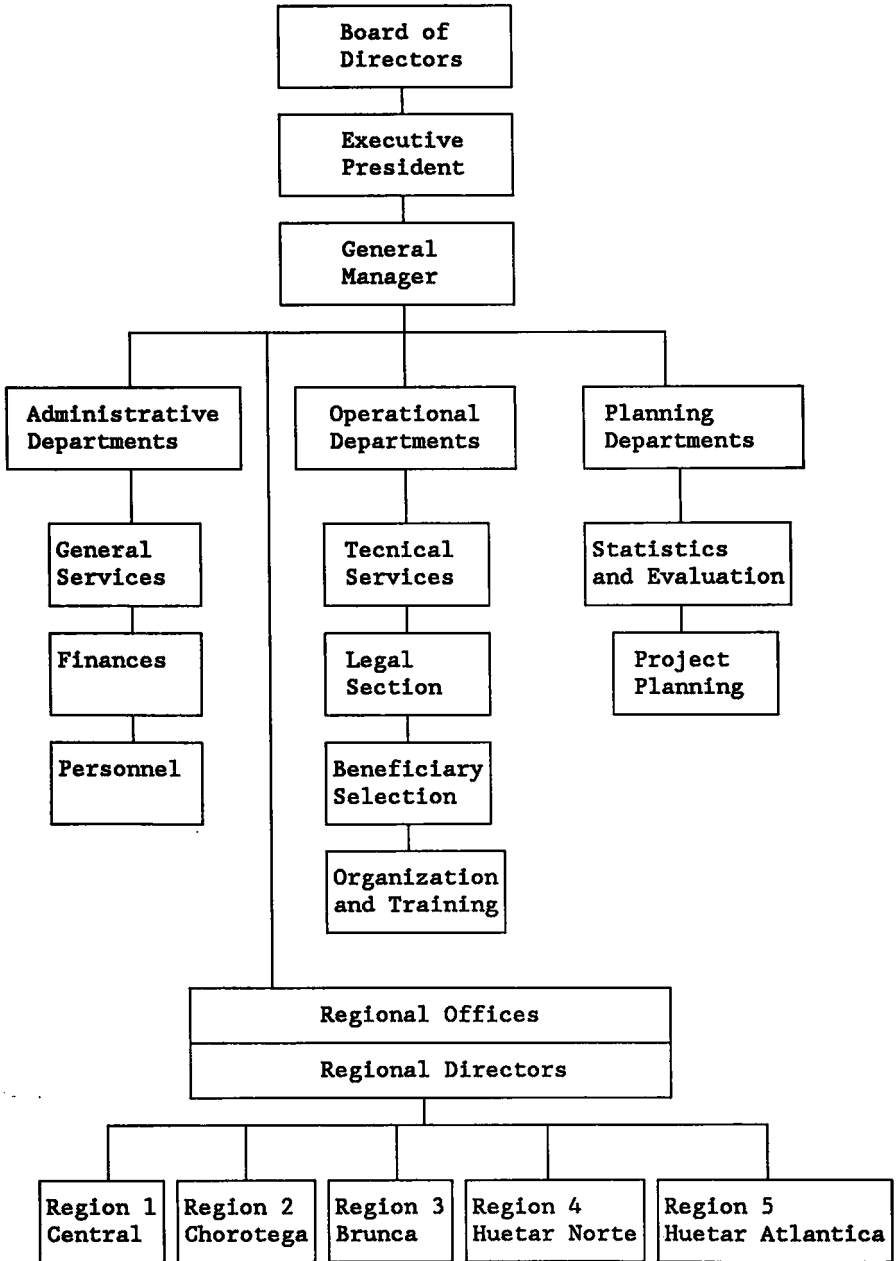


Figure 2.1 Organizational chart of the IDA since 1982

It should be emphasized that in talking about institutional projects I am not arguing that state managers engage in forms of rational decision-making according to given plans or programmes. An institutional project is the product of a series of experiences managers accumulate when dealing with a variety of problems, events and conflicts, and which force them to problematize issues of governability from the viewpoint of their ability to handle them. Institutional projects, then, encompass practical knowledge of how to deal with institutional problems, together with the rationalizations for doing so. The focus of this chapter, then, lies on how state managers develop interests, aspirations and capacities within the context of their own understanding of the policy process and the socio-institutional problematic.

2.2 The Historical and Institutional Context

The Costa Rican case is considered to be very unusual in Latin American terms. It is a country where democracy has prevailed since the Second World War and where a 'popular' uprising in 1948 led to the abolition of the army, and to the establishment, within a democratic environment, of a series of institutions directed at alleviating the basic needs of the population and expanding both political and economic democracy. For this reason Costa Rica has been called the Switzerland of Central America, an island of peace in a region devastated by wars and characterized by repressive military regimes and feudal social structures. A combination of explanations for this "atypical" case has been invoked; the "democratic" and peaceful character of its population, originating in a yeoman farmer's mentality; the absence of a source of wealth (gold and Indians) during colonial times large enough for the consolidation of a reactionary aristocracy (as in other Central American nations); the existence of an egalitarian land distribution pattern until the advent of the coffee economy, preempting the rise of a reactionary class of large landholders as in the case of neighbouring countries; its ethnic homogeneity and associated absence of a racist colonial ideology or an "ethnic question"; the liberal ideology of its agrarian bourgeoisie, etc. In short, it can be noted that in the literature there is much emphasis on continuity in Costa Rican history.

Many of these views, however, have been questioned lately. Gudmundson (1986) for example has shown that land ownership was highly concentrated even before the emergence of the coffee-based export economy and that military regimes were over the last century as common in Costa Rica as in other Latin American countries. With regard to its political history, a revisionist interpretation of the 1948 civil war has been offered by Jacobo Schifter (1986) and others casting doubts on the 'progressive' character of the outcomes of the events of 1948. This discussion is for my purpose highly relevant, as these events gave way to a drastic expansion of the Costa Rican institutional system. This expansion is attributed by the official historiography to the populist zeal of the victorious revolutionaries, who set out to incorporate the masses in national political life by increasing their access to basic services like health care, education, and housing, and by improving general economic conditions through a democratization of credit, better marketing services and access to land.

As it would be outside the scope of this work to review Costa Rican political history and its interpretation, I will discuss here the work of Schifter in order to attain a better understanding of the political and administrative context in which the land reform agency IDA operates. Special attention will be paid to the discussion surrounding the populist and/or corporatist character of the Costa Rican political system.

From a non-transformational populist to a non-populist transformational regime

Costa Rican democracy has usually been interpreted as the outcome of a populist/democratic revolution fought against a curious alliance between a charismatic *caudillo*, Rafael Calderón, the Church, and the Communist Party. Calderón, a member of the coffee oligarchy became president in 1940 and embarked on a series of reforms under the influence of catholic social reform doctrine. He was, among others things, responsible for the establishment of a generalized health care system and the introduction of a progressive labour legislation code. As these projects cost him the support of the traditional elites he allied himself with the Communist Party, which led the opposition to accuse him of combining authoritarianism with demagogic populism, and, associated with this, of corrupt use of state funds. Picado, Calderón's stand-in² in the 1944 elections, had even closer ties to the communists, something that scared the upper and the middle classes. The 1948 elections, in which Calderón again was a candidate, were highly contested and when in the confusion these were annulled, social democratic intellectuals joined with conservatives in an armed attack on the government under the charismatic leadership of José Figueres, a staunch nationalist who dreamed of reviving the Central American Confederation. This insurrection gave way to what has been designated by historians the civil war of 1948³.

A central role in the resolution of the conflict in favour of the "revolutionaries" was played by the USA who, increasingly preoccupied with the cold war, had become concerned with the communists' role in Picado's government (1945-1948). Finally, an agreement was reached between the contending parties stipulating that a *Junta de Gobierno Provisional* (a provisional government) would be established under the leadership of Figueres. While in office Figueres outlawed the communist party, eliminated the left from the government and state-bureaucracy and avidly repressed all forms of organization in which communists were suspected of being involved. Yet, to the dissatisfaction of the conservative opposition, he not only maintained Calderón's progressive legislation but even moved beyond it, by nationalizing the banking system and imposing higher taxes. The culmination of his programme was the abolition of the army, something which has made of Figueres the undisputed hero of the revolution, "the father of the modern democracy", and last but not least of the party he founded: *Liberación Nacional*. As a result, few authors nowadays doubt the democratic character of the 1948 movement, especially in view of the social democratic ideology of many of its leaders and the perceived dictatorial character of the *Calderonista* regime.

Schifter (1983), however, suggests that the current Costa Rican democratic and institutional system is based on a political impasse, or "neutralization" subsequent to the revolution of 1948. Consequently, he argues that the civil war of 1948 has been mistakenly viewed as a popular insurrection. Instead, it was an armed insurrection carried out by a militarist adventurer (José Figueres), supported by a group of middle class intellectuals with a transformationalist ideology in alliance with the old coffee oligarchy. The reason for the common interpretation of the Figuerista movement as a populist one should, in his view, be sought in the rigidity of models used to interpret Latin American political systems. Thus, initially, models of political development focusing on democracy and citizenship proposed by authors such as Rostow (1952) and Germani (1973) and the official historiography of the 1948 events complemented each other. In this view these events were interpreted as the culmination of a democratic process which brought into power the middle class, a class which in this

²The Costa Rican constitution forbids a president to serve two consecutive terms.

³See Bell (1971) for an insightful account of the 1948 civil war and Shifter (1986), for a more critical analysis.

political science model was seen as the historical bearer of democracy. Within this model, the development of democracy is seen as correlative to economic modernization and an associated expansion of civil society. As a result the historical events become, in this basically modernization perspective, subservient to an ethnocentric linear political model. Schifter's thesis is that the events of 1948 led from a non-transformational populist to a non-populist transformationalist regime, and that the democratic system emerged not so much by design but as the outcome of an implicit political pact between the victors of the civil war - the oligarchy and the middle classes. The great losers of this outcome, in his view, were the urban and rural working and lower classes "whose unions faced repression and economic blackmail" (idem).

This reading of Costa Rican political history is highly significant as it provides a different explanation for the rationale behind the explosive expansion of the institutional environment after 1948. The explanation, then, should not be cast in terms of the populist/incorporationist nature of the political system but in terms of the state's double role in a) exercising social control over the lower classes and b) in providing services and jobs for the middle classes.

In providing an alternative explanatory framework for the Costa Rican case, Schifter draws a sharp distinction between the development ideology that inspires political leaders and the participatory nature of the political movement or regime they represent. Thus, in discussing the Costa Rican case he differentiates between the nationalist/developmentalist transformationalist ideology of Figueres and the populist movement of Calderón, which in terms of development ideology was definitely conservative. The Figuerista movement, on the other hand, was not a popular one as it did not seek a wider participation of the working classes in the political process.⁴

The social democratic movement, which provided the ideological basis to the Figuerista movement, had clear elitist tendencies as it never sought to gain the favour of the masses in order to accomplish the revolution. Figueres, the leader of the insurgency, saw his actions in the wider context of the liberation of Central America of reactionary dictatorships and its unification under a common rule. Yet, Figueres, when he was the head of an interim government board after he won the civil war, realized himself that he lacked the popular support necessary to carry out its nationalist programme in the face of his conservative allies. Thus he sought an accommodation with the communists in order to gain the support of the urban working class. However, these negotiations broke down and his movement got almost no electoral support in the congressional elections of 1950. At that moment, Figueres realized that ensuring power by means of a dictatorship was out of question, as his position vis-à-vis the oligarchy had become too weak. In that conjuncture, one way to ensure that the reforms he had enacted as the leader of the post-civil-war *Junta de Gobierno* (Government Council) would not be annulled by a prospective conservative military dictatorship was simply to abolish the army. In addition, Figueres took two crucial measures in order to lay the popular basis for a new political party. First, he maintained the social reforms enacted under Calderón. And, second, he expanded the state bureaucracy significantly by creating the system of autonomous institutions.

⁴Accordingly, Shifter defines a transformationist development ideology (in contrast to a conservative or a communist one) as "a non-marxist political current oriented to social, political and economic change. Its principal aim is to restructure relations of dependence in order to make possible a more independent economic development". A populist movement/regime, in turn, aims at incorporating the popular masses into the political system under an elitist direction based on a multi-class alliance (Shifter, 1975).

The ensuing alliance between the conservative anti-populist elite and the *Figuerista* movement paved the way for an enduring democratic system. Within this alliance it was the conservatives who brought in the votes and the Figueristas who provided the military force. Given the debilitation of the *Calderonista*-populists after the conflict and the repression against the left, electoral success was ensured for Figueres in the presidential elections of 1953.

Thus, in sharp contrast with the large majority of authors who characterize Figuerismo as a democratic/populist movement of the Peruvian APRA type, Schifter interprets the 1948 Figuerista insurgency as "a transformist intent to implant an authoritarian corporatist development model" (p.194). However, the impasse which arose after the 1948 civil war led neither to a form of authoritarian corporatism nor to a continuation of the populist regime. The outcome paradoxically was "democracy".

Indeed, Figueres, in view of his lack of electoral support in the elections for a Constituent Assembly in 1948 (he was then Head of State in an Interim Government), introduced a set of reformist measures which in effect combined the social reforms enacted in the forties with a distinct developmentalist programme. Such developmentalism was carried out through the establishment of a large institutional sector intended to become a powerful instrument for state intervention. It is through such a programme that the party he founded in 1951, *Liberación Nacional*, has been able to remain the major electoral force in Costa Rica to date.

The system of autonomous institutions, the mainstay of Costa Rican institutional life, expanded considerably over the years (Dunkerley 1988: 590-655). This sector, which already accounted for 44 per cent of the state budget during Figueres' first term (1953-1958) increased to nearly 50 per cent during the administration of Orlich (1962-66). This increase was further sustained by the subsequent *Liberacionista* governments of Figueres (1970-1974) and Oduber (1974-1978). Similarly, in 1978 there were 182 decentralized institutions, 76 of which were established after 1960. State intervention was both directed to supporting large-scale capitalist initiatives within the context of Costa Rica's entry to the Central American Common Market (CACM) and to bolstering non-industrial production activity while supporting national consumption. This was the case with the establishment of the INVU, the Housing Development Agency in 1954, and the CNP, the National Marketing Board in 1956. These institutions, by providing subsidies to producers (farmers and building entrepreneurs) and consumers (housing and cheap food for the urban middle and lower classes), both supported indigenous productive activity and served to create a social basis for the developmentalist programme *Liberación Nacional*.

Applying Schifter's analysis to the IDA

Schifter's account provides a highly useful interpretation of the establishment of the Costa Rican political system, not in terms of the effects of any 'development model' but as the (unexpected) outcome of a struggle between competing socio-political projects. Certainly, by adopting a basically corporatist framework, Schifter argues that Costa Rican democracy is the outcome of the 'neutralization of classes' subsequent to this impasse. Yet, it would be interesting to extend the argument to an analysis of the dynamics of the institutional system. Thus, in applying Schifter's political analysis to the IDA, it could be suggested that in the IDA there is a tension between different institutional projects, each of them referring to the political project of *Liberación Nacional*, and that the history of the IDA can better be understood in terms of the struggles and compromises reached between such institutional projects, than in terms of the complete adoption and implementation of any one of them.

2.3 Analysing Competing Institutional Projects

Major social actors in the chapter

In the remainder of the chapter I concentrate on those social actors who played a special role in their introduction and evolution. Thus, it is argued that the institutional projects analysed in this chapter were closely related to the leading role of three individuals who left a clear imprint on the institution: Don Antonio Salgado, the founder of the IDA who served three terms as Executive President; Francisco Salazar, a former Head of the Training and Education Department (*Departamento de Organización y Capacitación Empresarial*, DOCAE), and who became the ideologue of the Cooperative movement (he was founder of the Cooperative Popular Bank) and later Minister of Agriculture; and Don Roberto Arcos, the General Manager of the Institute at the time I conducted my research. Each of them developed a project which included a view of the IDA's role within the institutional framework of the *Liberación Nacional* party to which they belonged, a conception of development and a particular understanding of how relations between the IDA and its (potential) beneficiaries ought to be.

Central in the definition of these institutional projects is their conceptualization of institution-client relationships as developed within the wider institutionalist world-view of the *Liberación Nacional* party. Don Antonio Salgado, a prominent *Liberacionista* politician of the old guard, believed that the modernization of Costa Rican agriculture was possible by distributing land to independent farmers, while avoiding too much state intervention. One major criticism directed against his policy was that giving a settler land in a distanced colony, with little access to markets and institutional support only meant 'distributing poverty'. I designate this project, in a somewhat contradictory way, the anti-interventionist one.⁵

On the other hand, we will see that the populist/incorporationist project of Francisco Salazar had a strong populist character. He developed his views on 'economic democracy' as founder of the Popular Bank and ideologue of the cooperative movement. Underlying this populist project was the view that rural inhabitants had to be incorporated within national political and economic life, so as to become rightful Costa Rican citizens. However, he was criticized for deviating from the original 'constitutional objectives of the IDA, and of converting the institution into a 'political machine'. Lastly we have the transformationalist project of Don Roberto Arcos, who in attempting to apply the original objectives of the IDA to the present agricultural situation of land scarcity argued that it was necessary to transform the peasant into an agricultural entrepreneur.⁶ We will see that such a transformationalist project was associated with the introduction within the IDA of the integrated rural development model (through the O34 Programme), together with attempts to implement a regional decentralization scheme.

It should be stressed, however, that the existence of tensions between anti-interventionist, populist/incorporationist and transformationalist conceptions does not yet explain the actual dynamics of the power struggles within the institution. To that end it is important to analyse how such conceptions underwrite institutional practices

⁵This term I think expresses the contradictory nature of Don Antonio Salgado's project, that of carrying out intervention while attempting to counter the interventionist inclinations of IDA bureaucrats.

⁶In designating Don Roberto Arcos' style as transformationalist I do not suggest that his views were closer to those of Figueres than those of Antonio Salgado and Antonio Salazar. 'Transformationalist' in this sense refers to the idea that peasants have to be transformed into agricultural entrepreneurs.

in relation to the land reform problematic. The approach followed focuses on the actors' own interpretations of the strategic choices they face during their career. I hope that by putting these interpretations within a historical context valuable insights can be gained into the dynamics of the IDA.

The anti-interventionist project: Don Antonio Salgado

Don Antonio Salgado played a decisive role in the formation and further evolution of the ITCO/IDA. As he was close to the historical leaders of the *Liberación Nacional* party, he was asked to extend the system of autonomous institutions by establishing a Land and Colonisation Institute in 1961. After founding the ITCO⁷ Don Antonio Salgado was twice again appointed Executive President of the institute. His second term took place during the last two years of the Oduber administration (1974-1978), when he was asked to negotiate the expropriation of the United Fruit plantations in the south-west of the country. In effect, Oduber's administration was the one that gave most impulse to the 'land question'. Before being appointed IDA's Executive President, Don Antonio had been the *Liberación* party leader in Congress. He fulfilled his last tenure as Executive President during the Monge administration (1982-1986), when he experienced a series of confrontations with peasant unions, politicians and bureaucrats within the IDA.

We will see that Don Antonio kept to a number of principles throughout his involvement with the IDA. These key conceptions were contested in his second and third terms by a 'populist' faction within the IDA that wanted to extend the institution. Yet he had a much harder time when opposing the attempts of funding organisations (USAID) to 'modernize' the institution during his third term. This led to the accusation from the 'modernizers' that he had an authoritarian and personalistic approach which was out of tune with the needs of the country. All the same, it will be shown that his conceptions of the tasks and responsibilities of the IDA still influenced the thinking of his successors within the institute.

In exploring his institutional project I will focus on the relationship between his key conceptions and a number of emerging problems during his terms at the IDA.

From the IDA's creation to the seventies: Problems in holding to an operational view of the the IDA's tasks

For Don Antonio Salgado setting up an institution was not just an administrative issue, for this went together with a conception of the role that the institution had to play in order to resolve a concrete problematic. Indeed, for Don Antonio it had always been clear that the operational nature of the IDA should be paramount. As he put it,

"When you are creating an institution you proceed according to a particular philosophy. I have always had a few conceptions which have been controversial, which have been opposed by some, but which prevailed as long as I was in charge. In my view the IDA should not become a large bureaucratic entity, but remain small, capable, with the help of its lawyers, of buying a *fincas*, with its support to distribute plots to peasants and assign one or two agronomists to help the settlers to establish agricultural production. Then, the institution should go along, as the song says, with the music".

Don Antonio always took care that institutional support in colonies and settlements did not become local bureaucracies. In his view, that would have opened the door to types

⁷Throughout the remainder of the text I hold to the designation IDA even when referring to the situation before 1981.

of institutional practice characteristic of an 'entrepreneurial state'. He argued that an institution such as the IDA should be small, flexible and able to mobilize people and resources quickly, while being highly goal-oriented. In his view it was important to avoid fostering any kind of paternalism towards (potential) beneficiaries.

Yet such a view was not easy to maintain. In the seventies, from the government of Oduber (1974-1978) onwards, the Costa Rican state became increasingly involved in stimulating national industries. This increase in state interventionism not only occurred in urban areas and in industry,⁸ but also in rural areas, among other places on the west coast where the IDA played an important role in the expropriation of large landholdings and the lands of the United Fruit plantations in the south. At the same time, agrarian entrepreneurs were stimulated to engage in highly profitable forms of agri-business through state-subsidies. As a consequence, a type of entrepreneurship emerged which was very dependent on establishing close relationships with the state bureaucracy. Moreover, state intervention offered opportunities to bureaucrats to engage in business activities and to pursue their political ambitions.

State-interventionism in Costa Rica in the seventies coincided with an increase, globally, of the popularity of interventionist strategies for rural development. It was therefore difficult for an institutional manager to hold to a conception of the IDA's task as solely directed to the distribution of land, especially since the line ministries were not interested in laying out infrastructure in new areas where there was not yet an established population demanding their services. As a consequence, the IDA had to provide these services in order to attract people to these areas. But in Don Antonio Salgado's view that ought to be the case only in the first phase of the establishment of a settlement.

Views on the integrated rural development idea

Indeed, Don Antonio Salgado had strong critical views about rural development organized through constructs such as cooperativism, integrated rural development and related concepts such as the pilot project. He regarded the large scale comprehensive Programmes financed by USAID, the European community or other cooperation agencies in his third and last term in office (1982-1984) with much suspicion.⁹ He saw these programmes as damaging for the autonomy of the institution and for the sovereignty of the country. He argued that it was not necessary to introduce foreign models in order to resolve the Costa Rican agrarian question. For,

"Costa Rican peasants have a long tradition of adapting to new conditions. Peasants have positive and negative features and we have to take account of them. They are fiercely independent and cling to their land. It is deleterious to attempt to introduce collective or communitarian forms of production. I have always combatted that point of view".

According to him this whole "integrated rural development" approach had become fashionable due to the "alliance for progress" programmes and related ideologies. They

⁸One result of this interventionism was the creation of CODESA (*Corporación Costarricense de Desarrollo S.A.*), a conglomerate of industries and businesses founded by Figueres in 1972. It expanded its operations during Oduber's tenure (1972-1974). It is also interesting to note that Oduber had important political and business connections in Guanacaste, where he built a network of roads, and that landholders there received much support for agro-industrial crops (rice). Yet, it remained an area of outmigration to the Atlantic Zone.

⁹The following loans had already been approved when Don Antonio Salgado took up office: one of \$30 million from the World Bank for the cultivation of African oil palm in the ex-UFCO plantations in Coto Brus, and another of \$8 million from the Inter-American Development Bank for reforestation projects in several areas of the country.

were not tailored to the Costa Rican experience. He had a few experiences with such integrated rural development programmes. He had been invited to Nicaragua and Mexico to admire colonisation schemes which had been set up according to that model. He commented,

"You see that land reform agencies in those countries are very preoccupied in creating show-pieces. Thus, by concentrating on one model settlement they neglect the rest. In Mexico, for example, the settlement scheme we visited had its own hotel. There was a large presence of engineers and extensionists, well-dressed and well-housed.

In his view this led to a rigid top-down structure. At the bottom of the whole structure was the peasant, badly dressed, their children with extended bellies, and with no say in the management of the settlement. The main purpose of this bureaucratic structure appeared to be to provide work for officials who were regularly following courses at technical institutes - by preference abroad - and to accomplish nothing. He argued that there was also an authoritarian side to these schemes as the peasants were deprived of their rights to decide what was best for them. He had seen similar schemes in Nicaragua. Thus he argued that the role of the state in agricultural development should not exceed that of providing the basic conditions for sustained development. He absolutely opposed a type of intervention which would generate autonomous interests of officials. Neither did he believe in the idea of the pilot project as it attracted too many resources in a limited area. In his view this had been happening in the IDA under the influence of new large integrated programmes financed by international agencies. As he argued,

"For many functionaries it may be extremely attractive to be involved in a large programme financed by an international agency. That gives them the possibility to receive salaries higher than the president's. The result is what you see nowadays at the IDA; one department is working with this agency in this area and another department elsewhere. You see that currently most resources are channelled to areas where large projects have been established. That is unjust for the peasants of other areas and it creates regional inequalities".

Summarizing, we see that Don Antonio Salgado held to a clear administrative project based on a conception of the Costa Rican peasant as an independent and entrepreneurial freeholder, of the agrarian problem as one which could be resolved by way of a policy of settlement within the legal possibilities of the law, of the Costa Rican institutional environment as intimately connected with the social-democratic project of his party. It is not surprising, then, that Don Antonio was opposed to the O34 Programme. He was afraid that the programme would transform the IDA into a bureaucratic entity, besides making it dependent on foreign funds. This opposition was reflected in his reluctance to cooperate with USAID functionaries.¹⁰ Neither did Don Antonio allow the O34 Programme to become an integral part of IDA, let alone for IDA to be restructured along the views of the O34 consultants. Ultimately, Don Antonio Salgado had to comply under the pressure of Luis Alberto Monge, the then President of Costa Rica, with the implementation of the project.

In analysing Don Antonio Salgado's conceptions on Land reform it would be interesting to compare them with those of one of the USAID consultant of the O34 Programme, and a well-known specialist on Costa Rican Land Reform, Mitchell Seligson.

¹⁰Indeed this led to an open conflict with the USA's ambassador.

Contrasting two views on land reform: Don Antonio Salgado's and Seligson's
 Seligson (1980) in his influential book *El Campesino y El Capitalismo Agrario*¹¹ distinguishes three successive approaches to colonization and agrarian reform by the IDA:

1. land colonization (1962-66)
2. an approach focusing on titling and resolving the squatter's legal situation (1967-1970)
3. third, the establishment of communal agrarian enterprises and individual allotments (1970 and onwards).

It is evident that the third approach has Seligson's sympathies, while he is quite critical of the first two. In his view the colonization approach was a failure as only 1272 families acquired land on 15,412 has. in 11 colonies. The second approach, giving legal titles, though successful in its limited purposes, did not address the basic questions of the agrarian problem.

In Seligson's view, the colonization programme was a failure because of a lack of infrastructure in the colonies and their distance from urban areas. On the basis of structured interviews and attitudinal studies he argues that many settlers felt abandoned by the state. Furthermore, they received little support in terms of extension and credit. He also argues that the selection study was flawed. Many received land thanks to their political connections, while others who were sent to these colonies were undesirable persons - drunks, vagabonds and political enemies. Finally, many settlers felt deceived by the IDA as they argued that they were lured to the colonies with promises that they would soon receive adequate housing and other social amenities.

Underlying his analysis is a view of IDA's problems as being caused by a paternalist relationship with beneficiaries. The implication of this analysis is that the relationship between IDA and clients should be depoliticized. This, in Seligson's view and that of the planners of the 034 Programme, was only possible by 1) reorganising the institution so as to make it more effective and thus less paternalistic, and 2) developing an effective beneficiary selection system. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how these views crystallize in what I designate the 'model of the client', that is, the view that the key to successful land reform is that of selecting (groups of) beneficiaries who are amenable to be transformed into entrepreneurial farmers. It suffices here to say that this model reduces the problematic of land reform to that of being a problem of institutional management, and that of identifying the key personality variables by which potential entrepreneurial farmers can be identified.

In comparing Seligson's views with those of Don Antonio, I argue that two different conceptions confront each other, one which focuses on institutional efficiency and another one which views land reform within the socio-political project of the *Liberación party*. Seligson's is an argument in favour of directed colonization, whereas Don Antonio is mostly interested in distributing as much land as possible, with a view to preserving social peace within the institutional framework set up by *Liberación*. The latter's views, then, are not also institutional but also political, as he was interested in more than in improving the economic viability of settlements. An additional argument can be put forward against Seligson's representation of IDA's history. To begin with, IDA has never enjoyed the full support of the Costa Rican political system, not even within *Liberación Nacional*. Thus, it can be argued that the failure of IDA in the second

¹¹The book - at least in its English edition - is influential because it has become the standard work on Costa Rican agrarian reform for funding organisations such as USAID.

part of the sixties to address the basic principles of the agrarian problem was not because of a flawed policy but due to the fact that non-*Liberacionista* governments never had agrarian reform high on their agenda.¹²

Don Antonio's views, I think, show that the reality of state intervention is much more complex and that it is embedded within a history of institutional and political struggles. In his view, the IDA had to remain a small non-bureaucratic institution and maintain a degree of autonomy from the wider political system and from international agencies. He maintained that the IDA's objective ought to be that of distributing land at the lowest cost possible, and not to getting engaged in costly developmental projects. Otherwise, he feared, IDA would become an instrument in the hands of larger political and bureaucratic forces.

It can be argued, then, that Don Antonio Salgado's views, are institutional and political, whereas Seligson's are geared to denying the political nature of IDA intervention. The argument, then, is that state intervention is throughout a political process, and particularly, that IDA intervention in Costa Rica cannot be separated from the workings of political processes at the institutional and national level.

Next, I will concentrate on how Don Antonio Salgado clashed with another institutional project, the populist/incorporationist one of Francisco Salazar, Head of the IDA Training and Education Department (DOCAE), and which was based on a contrasting set of assumptions. This project propounded an active intervention of the state in creating the appropriate organizational forms for agrarian development. In addition, various types of (grass-roots) political pressures were applied, or 'organized', to force the institution to intervene in land disputes. It will be shown that Francisco Salazar drew upon a wider political network than Don Antonio, in developing his incorporationist/populist institutional project.¹³ This project will be analyzed from the perspective of how Don Antonio Salgado and the O34 Programme advisor and later General Manager, Roberto Arcos, dealt with it.

The rise of the populist/incorporationist project

Already during Don Antonio's second term (1976-78) many new employees at the IDA appeared to have leftist sympathies, thereby opening a door to parties of the left. In fact, the Head of the Personnel Department was in the hands of a leftist sympathiser and he used his influence to employ many leftists, as many as 60 of them. As these people started to encourage land invasions Don Antonio Salgado decided to stop them and after obtaining money from the government for the "prestaciones" (the pension payments) he started to dismiss them. This was facilitated, he argues, by the fact that the political pressure from peasant groups was not yet so heavy, and he was able to control the situation. Crucial, though, was that he had the full support of President Oduber. At the time he had a large budget with which he bought some *latifundia* for land distribution to settlers. Although it cost him some popularity he was able to enter into confrontation with the leftists without too many risks.

One of the critical "historical" events at the institution, which took place during his second term, was the conflict between Don Antonio Salgado and Francisco Salazar who, as stated above, was Head of the Training and Education Department of the IDA.

¹²But also Figueres was not interested in agrarian reform, which is reflected in the low budget he assigned to IDA.

¹³I did not have the opportunity to interview Francisco Salazar. His institutional project is analysed on the basis of the accounts of former subordinates and colleagues who still were active in the IDA.

Salazar was a very gifted politician and organizer. But as Don Antonio recalls, Francisco Salazar, at a given point, started to disregard his commands. They started to clash, and eventually in 1978, Don Antonio had to dismiss him. As he recalls, Salazar developed a 'style' very much his own. He loved to do favours and had a great capacity to secure the commitment of the people he appointed. He was also very conscious of the risks he ran in pursuing his political ambitions. When Don Antonio gave him notice that he would have to dismiss him, Salazar argued that he was just using the rules of the game like any other intelligent party member would do. As Don Antonio recalls: "He suggested that I was doing the same and that it was his right to do so".

The decision to dismiss Francisco Salazar was a difficult one, as Don Antonio himself had encouraged him to deploy his talents. In fact, in the beginning, their cooperation was excellent since Don Antonio needed his organizational qualities in a period when the institution was accomplishing major land reform tasks. Salazar, however, held very different views and interests from Don Antonio. This young agronomist, though he had never worked as one, had been involved since he was in the university in the cooperative movement and represented the dreams for change of this growing sector. He was also Secretary of the youth sector of the *Liberación Nacional* party in a period in which the party made great efforts to secure its influence in the universities and gain the support of potential student-leaders. One reason for these efforts was that the left was becoming an important contender in the student movement.

In effect, apart from Don Antonio, Salazar was the only IDA functionary to become a prominent politician at the national level. Salazar left the IDA in 1978 and did not reach a position such as General Manager or Executive President, but he was able to follow his political career in the cooperative movement. The fact that as Head of IDA's Training and Education Department he had already established a clientele, helped him much in developing his career. The cooperative movement, it must be noted, continued to grow during the Monge administration¹⁴ (1982-1986) and became active in organising farmers in the countryside. Its growth was also related to the rise of political unions in the plantation sector of the Atlantic zone which were close to *Liberación Nacional*, such as the FESIAN (*Federación Sindical Agraria Nacional*). Later, Francisco Salazar became founder and first President of the Cooperative Bank, and Minister of Agriculture during the Monge (1982-1986) administration.

It can be argued that don Antonio's institutional project, which in fact transcended IDA, epitomized what the planners of the O34 Programme designated the 'paternalist vices' of the IDA. The influence of Salazar's project endured within the IDA, and as we will see, his followers there acquired much power during the *Liberacionista* administration of Monge. Indeed, Don Antonio was forced to seek a compromise with them in order to confront a series of conflicting demands.

Confronting conflicting demands

During the Monge (1982-86) administration, during his third and last term, the situation became more complicated for Don Antonio. Before Monge there had been no powerful peasant organizations operating at the national level. The communist party, already with a long history in Costa Rica, had not been able to form them. President Monge had been in Geneva at the International Labour Organisation, ILO, and this organization, with a long history in Costa Rica, had not been able to form them. President Monge had been in Geneva at the International Labour Organisation, ILO, and this organization, and the largest USA union, the AFL-CIO, sent assessors to Costa Rica,

¹⁴Former President Luis Alberto Monge was himself a former labour union leader.

after which they founded a democratic peasant union, which became the *Federación Sindical Agraria Nacional* (FESIAN). The members began to invade *fincas*, or large landholdings, shielded by the party banner. According to Don Antonio Salgado they were even worse than the leftists as they had easy access to the President's staff via the party. Moreover, they were competing with the leftists in radicalism. They had their own representative in Congress; a member of *Liberación*. That caused a serious problem to the IDA as they started to cultivate a large following. Don Antonio Salgado recalls that he spent much time in negotiating with these newly formed peasant organizations, in the typical Costa Rican, or *tico* tradition (e.g. in a conciliatory and peaceful way).

It was rumoured that his frustration in dealing with them had led to his submitting his resignation. It was also said that the peasant organizations had asked for his head. As I confronted him with this view he laughed and contended that the Union had not been his worst problem by far. His real problems lay in a different field. They were connected with his relation to the Presidency, and other Ministers. Initially his relationship with Monge had been excellent. He was chosen as Executive President of the IDA with the status of Minister. The party had committed itself during the elections to paying most attention to the rural sector. For that reason the Monge administration's political *lema* (catch phrase) was *volvamos a la tierra* (let us return to the land). However, in reality Monge was not so interested in the agrarian question. This was more a propagandist move. At the same time there were various high-ranking people who were trying to manipulate the institute. That, in fact, was Salgado's problem. The vice-president (Alberto Fait) wanted to use the IDA to promote his candidacy as next president. He already controlled the IMAS, the *Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social* (Institute of Social Welfare), an institute founded by José Figueres, in his last tenure (1970-1974), to combat poverty, especially in urban areas. Don Antonio was convinced that the vice-president wanted to expand his influence to the rural areas.

Salgado also had ongoing conflicts with the various Ministers of Agriculture. Officially he was a Minister like them but it appeared that they had their own political agenda. Strange alliances were established with peasant unions, and invasions were not only tolerated but even encouraged. According to Don Antonio Salgado, that was playing with fire. Moreover, he argued that some Ministers started discrediting him vis-à-vis the President in their efforts to gain control over the institution. As a result his relationship with the President lost much of its initial closeness.

In short, it became very difficult for him to counter the pressures from peasant organizations at a time when high-placed politicians were not willing to respect the independence of the IDA. This was occurring within a context of political turmoil and associated high ministerial turnover. There were three Agricultural Ministers during this government. The last one was Carlos Rojas, owner of one of the largest haciendas in the Atlantic zone, who was especially generous towards another peasant union, UPAGRA, because of the fear that they would invade his *finca* Bremen. (Instead UPAGRA invaded the contiguous hacienda of Neguev).

Establishing a coalition with the followers of Francisco Salazar

In the meantime Francisco Salazar had become President of the Cooperative Bank and the leading ideologue of the cooperative movement in the country, besides being Minister of Agriculture for a short period during the Monge administration. In the IDA his political friends took advantage of the institution's crisis for expanding their influence, by entering a series of negotiations with Don Antonio Salgado. Indeed, their ascendancy was the result of a conjunctural crisis which forced Don Antonio Salgado to negotiate a solution with them. The story is as follows.

In addition to these political problems, Don Antonio Salgado encountered a very complex situation when he came to IDA for his last period of (1982-1984). The IDA was in the midst of a financial crisis. There was a debt of more than 300 million colones. On top of this the union of professionals was demanding higher salaries and to that effect had initiated a law-suit against the IDA. One of the principal demands was that they should be paid extra allowances to offset the abandoning of the custom of hiring out their specialized services to private interests groups. They had been obliged to dedicate their services exclusively to the institution (*dedicación exclusiva*¹⁵). Obviously, Don Antonio was totally opposed to allocating scarce resources to salaries when they could have been employed for buying more *fincas*.

In these circumstances Don Antonio Salgado established an alliance with the Workers' Union in order to neutralize the professionals' union. The latter was controlled by the opposition party, Unidad, but the Worker's Union was in the hands of *Liberación*, namely the group of Francisco Salazar supporters. In return for their support against the Professional Union he offered them key-positions in the institution and eventually within the 034 Programme. Thus, some succeeded in occupying such positions as Secretary of the Executive Board, Head of the 034 Programme Credit Fund, and other important positions within the institute such as Heads of various Departments. This group had a common trajectory, they had been through the Training and Education Department, DOCAE, and were active in the youth sector of the *Liberación* party. Furthermore, they controlled important organizations within the institution such as the Cooperative and, very important, the Worker's Union.

The way the group of Salazar followers were able to acquire important positions is interesting, especially as they came close to controlling the entire institution. Yet, politically, they were not as clever as Francisco Salazar and they lacked the capacity to further develop an existing institutional project, let alone to put forward a new one. In short, they adopted Francisco Salazar's institutional project without being able to develop further his development ideology - based on the idea of cooperative development - and adapt it to the present situation.

With the support of Salazar's followers Don Antonio Salgado won the law-suit and it became possible for him to improve the IDA's financial position. Yet, the consequences of this negotiation - which had led to the promotion of many of Salazar's supporters to important posts within the IDA - were to become a heavy burden for the later programme adviser and then General Manager Don Roberto Arcos.

But how does this power struggle relate to the 034 Programme? It is interesting to see how Don Antonio Salgado manoeuvred between USAID, which was putting pressure on him to accept the 034 programme by way of President Monge himself, and the political opposition he encountered from within the institution by the followers of Francisco Salazar's populist institutional project, who controlled the Workers Union. He solved this problem by offering a key position in the 034 Programme to the followers of Francisco Salazar, namely that of Head of the Credit Fund. The effect of this strategic move was twofold; in this way he could divide IDA's professional and worker's unions, and thus overcome the financial crisis triggered off by the demands of the Professional Union for a salary increase; and secondly, by offering the leader of the followers of Francisco Salazar, the ambitious and highly populist politician Jesús Chávez, the post of Head of the Credit Fund. But in this second move he bequeathed to the 034

¹⁵The allowance for *dedicación exclusiva* was being demanded retroactively, which would have meant a heavy financial burden for IDA. It should be noted that it is still common practice for IDA lawyers and agronomists to be engaged in the private work of their own interests and those of resourceful third parties. This has been considered one of the main factors which makes IDA so permeable to private interests.

Programme a real problem, for Jesús Chávez was intent on using this position in order to expand his clientele for political purposes. Given the hidden objective of USAID to eradicate 'clientelist' practices from the IDA, this, in effect, proved to be an effective way of undermining what had been one of the key components of the 034 Programme from its inception.¹⁶

Discussion: Towards an understanding of institutional practices

In what sense can the concept of institutional project contribute to an improved understanding of institutional practice? So far we have focussed on the various sets of claims and demands Don Antonio Salgado had to deal with. It would be possible to follow a corporatist type of analysis following Schifter and Schmitter (1972) in which institutions are viewed as elements of a system of intermediation aiming at the integration of marginal and less marginal client-groups within the political body. Within this view, which is defended by many Costa Rican students of land reform, the relationship between state and civil society is seen as largely determined by the capacity of the state to impose and manipulate the rules of the game. Although it is recognized that changes are possible through negotiations between the state and political organizations, these are held to take place within the prevailing dominant institutional framework, which according to Schifter is the outcome of an impasse between rival political projects.

However, the institutional picture is somewhat more complicated as there are other types of pressures impinging upon state managers' decision-making, namely the pressures from foreign agencies and from political actors within the politico-institutional domain. As Don Antonio Salgado argued extensively, the intervention of international cooperation agencies can subvert existing organizational patterns by feeding the aspirations of many functionaries. In addition, an important force shaping the management environment is the operation of party politics within the institution itself, as there is a (ruling) party committee in each institution which "advises" over the distribution of posts.¹⁷

It also happens that government-supported peasant organizations are capable to establish alliances with sectors of the government or the party, while pursuing their own, increasingly autonomous, interests. These pressures add to those from peasant organizations connected to oppositional, leftist parties, and the demands from politically non-committed organizations building upon local interests. In addition, as we saw in the case of Don Antonio Salgado, institutional managers have to deal with the claims and demands from the central government, from the executive and from various ministers, and from Congress. Hence the cumulative demands of these organizations developed their own dynamic confronting the Don Antonio with a very delicate situation.

As a result the functioning of the prevailing institutional framework may be itself subject to a drastic redefinition due to changing alliances among the 'old' social actors and the appearance of newer ones in the political scene.

The thrust of the argument so far has been that institutional managers develop institutional projects on the basis of, first, their personal commitment to a particular

¹⁶This account is based on interviews with Don Antonio Salgado himself and with the later General Manager, Don Roberto Arcos. It was suggested by the latter that Don Antonio Salgado expected that the Credit Fund would be discontinued as soon as it appeared that Jesus Chavez was using it for his own political purposes.

¹⁷Yet, with regard to the party influence within the institution Don Antonio Salgado was emphatic that it was he who took the decisions. He did not let anyone impose any plan on him. Indeed, he agreed with the view presented to me by a high-ranking USAID official that he was an intransigent character.

politico-institutional world-view and of their own understanding of a particular problematic (in this case that of the agrarian question). In addition it has been argued that there is scope for negotiation and that by resolving one set of problems space may be created for managing another. In arguing this I am not suggesting that state managers' knowledge and understanding of institutional conditions is infallible. But an institutional project does leave an imprint on specific types of institutional management or practices of governability. What I am arguing is that they are not disembodied from determinate social relations with certain groups of actors, whether politicians, client-groups, local administrators, etc. That Salgado's institutional project still played a role in the IDA, even though it became increasingly difficult to apply his particular socio-institutional conceptions, is shown in the following case study of his successor, Don Roberto Arcos, who was first advisor to the O34 Programme (1982-1984), then Implementation Manager (1984-1986) and thereafter manager of the entire institute (1986-1988).

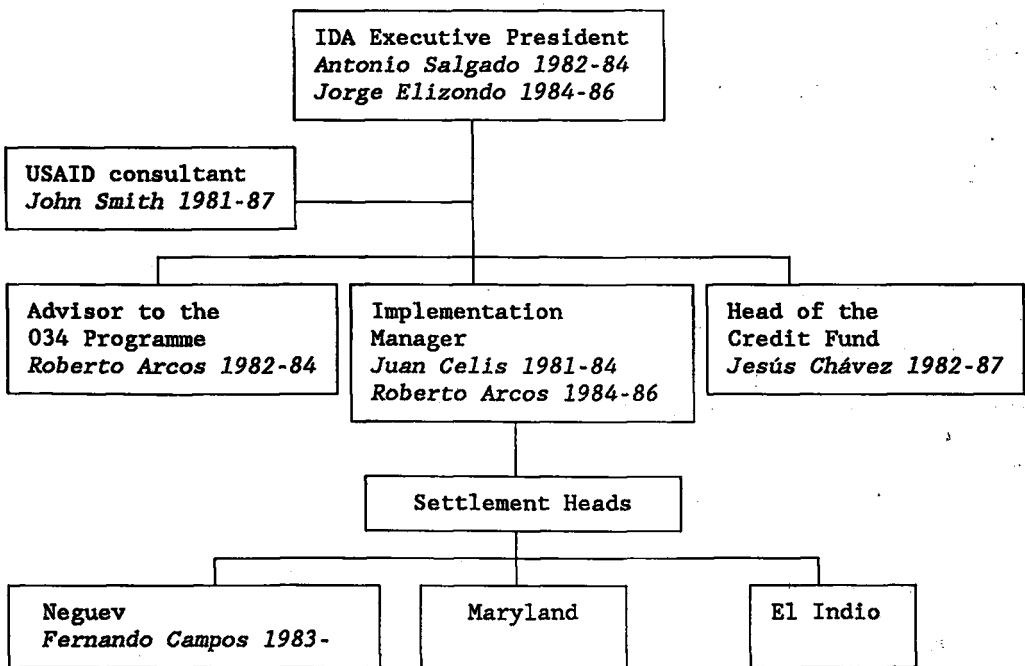


Figure 2.2 Organisational chart of the O34 Programme

The case of Don Roberto Arcos: The rise of the transformationalist project

Don Roberto Arcos attempted, between 1986 and 1988, to transform the institution's mode of operation by implementing a regional decentralization plan, in association with the integrated rural development idea. This attempt provides a view of the 034 Programme as an arena of struggle between different groups following contrasting institutional projects.

I begin with the conflicts he had to experience in order to become General Manager of the institution. A number of themes related to these problems will be discussed in order to describe the tactics he devised to resolve those conflicts.¹⁸ Two major actors in this case study, besides Don Roberto Arcos, are Jesús Chávez, a follower of Francisco Salazar, and former Head of the Workers' Union who became Head of the Credit Fund, and the USAID consultant, John Smith, in charge of the 034 Programme.

Let us first recall some basic facts concerning the 034 Programme. A few years after the 034 Programme was initiated USAID started to doubt the IDA's capacity and its willingness to bring the programme to completion. It threatened to stop it unless the management capacity of the institution was improved. One major complaint on the part of USAID was that the Programme Implementation Manager who was appointed by Don Antonio Salgado, Juan Celis, appeared not to be very efficient as an administrator. Consequently Don Antonio Salgado appointed Roberto Arcos as his personal consultant in order to take up the administration of the 034 Programme. When Don Roberto Arcos arrived in the IDA, the 034 Programme had suffered a delay of two years in its implementation. One major reason for this delay was Salgado's initial opposition to the programme, as it clearly contradicted his views on how the institution should function and the development model that should be followed. This was reflected in a personal conflict with the then American ambassador and a tiresome relationship with the USAID consultant, John Smith, who settled at the IDA's headquarters (in programme documents he is called the Resident Consultant). Yet, Don Antonio Salgado was forced to yield to President Monge, who, under American pressure, gave priority to the programme. The USAID Resident Consultant himself was keen to see that a young and dynamic person was selected who was not burdened by the IDA's internal rivalries, and therefore approved Salgado's choice of Roberto Arcos.

Before becoming advisor of the 034 Programme in 1982, Don Roberto Arcos was known as a hard-working engineer with good organizational abilities. In addition he was a promising black politician with some support in the Limón province of the Atlantic zone. At the time that he was offered work with the IDA he was working at the Ministry of Transport. He recalls that the decision to change this job for a position in the land reform agency was not an easy one. The IDA had the reputation of being a difficult (and many would say corrupt) agency, and its administration was known to be slow and cumbersome. As he put it,

"I came to the IDA because I was asked to by the then Executive President executive. I was also asked to by the party.¹⁹ I had a rewarding job at the Ministry of Transport (MOPT), where at the time Rolando Araya was Minister. Moving to the IDA was personally a difficult step and it implied a political risk,

¹⁸In elaborating this case study I have made use of a number of taped and informal conversations, and material Don Roberto Arcos provided, such as a paper written by an ex-assistant for a course on business administration.

¹⁹President Monge himself asked him to accept the offer.

since I was working in the team (*equipo*) of an honest and solid person and, what is very important, a potential presidential candidate. Don Antonio Salgado offered me excellent working conditions at the IDA and was able to convince me of the great advantages that the successful completion of the 034 Programme could provide for my further career".

In order to better understand how Arcos developed an institutional project of his own it is important to probe further into his views on the relationship between public office and a political career. He would describe this relationship in the following terms,

"In Costa Rica there are two ways to have a successful political career, through a party organization or through an institution. Both demand the demonstration of remarkable organizational capacities. You see that aspiring politicians try to follow the trajectories of successful politicians".

Climbing through a party organisation was not easy as this required a special political relationship with the older, 'historical' leaders. Thus Oscar Arias, who was President during 1986-1990, formed a political basis within the youth section of the party. But he belonged to a well-known family from the coffee oligarchy. Other politicians, like Don Roberto Arcos himself, had to prove their abilities in public office in order to catch the attention of party leaders.²⁰ Don Roberto's strategy, then, was directed to developing a reputation as an able black technocrat, while establishing a political base in Limón city as someone who was able to represent the province at national level. This seemed a quite viable strategy as Limón was under-represented in national political life. The IDA, in fact, exhibited one special advantage for him: it had a very clear presence in the Atlantic zone, where conflicts over land were more pervasive than in the rest of the country. But he was quite aware of the difficulties, "the IDA has not produced many good politicians. No one, since Don Antonio, with the exception of Francisco Salazar, has been able to use the institution as a political platform for higher positions".

The task of taking over the responsibility of the 034 Programme, then, was a challenge through which he could show his political and administrative abilities at an institution which was known to be highly difficult. Indeed, he thought restructuring such a political institution as the IDA would be a remarkable accomplishment. Thus it is important to note that underlying the institutional project he developed there was no rounded understanding of the agrarian problematic, but instead a political view about the importance of institutional frameworks in governing the country. We see then, that a technocratic outlook was coupled with a particular understanding of the relationship between public office and the opportunities it offered as a platform for advancing a political career.

Initially, he did not intend to stay in the institution for more than a few years. However, soon after arriving, he realized that in order to carry out his job he needed to become more and more involved in current institutional struggles. A major problem for him became that of asserting his authority.

Don Roberto Arcos' problems in asserting his authority

When Don Roberto Arcos became advisor to the 034 Programme in 1982 he had to coordinate with Don Juan Celis, the Implementation Manager of the Programme and with John Smith, the USAID consultant. Officially Don Roberto Arcos was in charge of

²⁰It is telling that the only politician in Costa Rica who did not need to combine a reputation as administrator and politician was José Figueres. It is said that he governed the country as if it were his own *hacienda*.

planning and monitoring and Don Juan Celis of operational activities. The 034 Programme depended on the support and the services of the entire institution. The Credit Fund, it should be noted, was one of the innovations of this programme and it was meant to play a pivotal role in its implementation. However, it soon became apparent to Don Roberto that there were few linkages between the programme's planning and its actual implementation. In his view activities were set up without any connection to programme goals. There was pressure on him to show progress in the short term and to that effect he needed the full commitment of a number of departments. Thus he decided to set up a coordinating commission which would meet weekly in order to discuss current matters. He recalls that one of his aims with those meetings was to gain an understanding of how the key functionaries perceived the new institution's policies. Thus, he saw attendance at the weekly meetings as a measure of the degree of commitment within the institution to the Programme.

In this context the support of the planning department was crucial, especially from the section of statistics and evaluation. This section was to provide information about the progress of activities undertaken, and especially on tasks which for some reason had not been finished and on the reasons for the delays. However, according to Arcos, the Head of the Planning Department, Octavio Fajardo, alleged that the scarcity of qualified personnel did not permit him to cooperate as he would have liked to, and he refused to attend the meetings. After some time it became clear to Arcos, that the real reason for Fajardo's lack of commitment to the programme was his resentment that the management and planning of the programme had been centralized in Arco's hands.

As mentioned before, the Credit Fund was central to the 034 Programme. Its Head, Jesús Chávez, was the former Head of the Worker's Union. His appointment had been the outcome of an agreement between him and Don Antonio Salgado. Arcos recalls that the Head of the Credit Fund frequented the meetings only at the beginning, and made it clear to all that he did not consider himself bound to decisions made in the meetings. In fact, he saw the Credit Fund not so much as a component of the 034 Programme but more as a general institutional response to the problem of lack of access to credit for Costa Rican peasants. Thus Jesús Chávez argued that since the peasants of Costa Rica were marginalized credit subjects of the National Bank system, and the Credit Fund was the only credit source open to them, it was necessary to expand the clientele as far as possible. In addition he saw this clientele in generic terms, not as "progressive or innovative farmers" but as the great majority of poor peasants. But Arcos, in contrast, worried about the lack of efficiency in the use of credit. He argued that the Credit Fund could not continue disbursing millions every month without knowing whether this money could ever be recovered. This clash of views and interests led to a serious conflict between the two characters. This conflict, as we will see, became part of a power struggle for control of the IDA and was fought out in the political arena.

Another serious problem for Arcos was that a clash with Juan Celis, the Programme Implementation Manager, became inevitable. Although officially Arcos was now in charge of planning and monitoring, he soon realized that for a successful outcome of the programme he would also need to take charge of programme implementation. Juan Celis resented Arcos' interference and avoided the weekly meetings. Soon the conflict between them became public. Juan Celis, an experienced agronomist and one of the oldest IDA employees, adhered to the same views as Don Antonio Salgado. In short, he gave a higher priority to the establishment of good working relations with 'cooperative' farmers than to the administrative tasks required for the implementation of an integrated rural development programme. When the

conflict became public Celis received the support of Jesús Chávez, the Head of the Credit Fund and Octavio Fajardo, the Head of the Planning Department.

After some time Arcos concluded that the output of the weekly meetings he had introduced to coordinate programme activities was very low. Most participants did not offer concrete proposals for problems belonging to their field of competence. The meetings had evolved into an arena of conflict in which more effort was expended in creating obstacles than in finding solutions for emerging problems. One way to secure the cooperation of some key-departments in the implementation of the O34 Programme was by threatening them that in case of refusal, additional USAID resources would be withheld. From then onwards, Don Roberto Arcos and John Smith, maintained control of all programme activities. However, one consequence of this strategy, which ran counter to the original objectives of the Programme, was that little integration occurred within the wider institutional structure.

Don Roberto Arcos becomes the O34 Programme Manager

Meanwhile the continuous pressure exerted on the IDA by *Liberacionista* and leftist peasant unions during 1982-1984 triggered off an agrarian political crisis which had serious consequences for the institution. The refusal of Don Antonio Salgado to negotiate with the government-supported peasant unions, culminated in union demands that Salgado should resign. At the same time, a group of politicians and an important part of the press also directed criticism to Don Antonio Salgado's handling of the crisis. With this, and in view of the lack of support he was receiving from the central government, Don Antonio Salgado did in fact resign.

Soon after his resignation, in July of 1984, a serious conflict arose between the O34 Implementation Manager, Juan Celis, and Roberto Arcos. Salgado had conceded complete authority regarding programme decisions to Roberto Arcos, but only as his personal assistant. With the departure of Don Antonio, Juan Celis was not prepared to share any degree of decision-making power. Don Roberto, therefore, found himself in a difficult situation as he had not the required institutional backing for completing his job. In this situation he turned to the support of John Smith, the USAID consultant, who after all made the key decisions over the use of resources and who supported Don Roberto fully.

John Smith had been heavily involved in the programme, especially at the implementation level, as he saw to it that resources were channeled only to specific activities according to a working programme. He was also involved in selecting the heads of settlements where the O34 IRDP was to be implemented. The settlement heads chosen had one thing in common, they were all young and all had a lot of experience as agronomists in the Atlantic zone, first on the plantations and thereafter within the IDA. Also, they were employed by the O34 Programme and thus lacked a stable contract as IDA personnel. Neither did they belong to any old faction within the institution. Their only allegiance was towards their direct superiors, Juan Celis and Roberto Arcos.

Don Roberto, then, established an alliance with the Heads of the three O34 Programme settlements with a view to ousting the Implementation Manager, Juan Celis. Don Roberto was able to secure their support by means of a plan to delegate authority for implementing the Programme to them. In consequence Don Juan Celis was forced to resign and Don Roberto became full manager of the O34 Programme (thus including implementation, planning and monitoring). Accordingly the settlement heads became responsible for the actual implementation at the regional level.

This strategic alliance led to positive outcomes. By June 1984, the programme showed important advances in the areas of titling and road infrastructure, in spite of

the poor cooperation of the departments in San José. Yet, one other consequence of this strategy was the conviction within the IDA that the O34 Programme remained an alien body within the institution and that Don Roberto was not sticking to the IDA's rule that important decisions should be made through political negotiations.

At the same time the positive effects of delegation of authority to the settlements heads strengthened Don Roberto Arcos in his views - largely inspired by John Smith - that the only way of improving the efficiency of the IDA was by giving power to the regions where decision-making was not burdened by institutional politics. Accordingly, he became totally committed to regional decentralization.

A new Executive President is appointed and the conflict escalates

In order to calm the political turmoil caused by the resignation of Don Antonio Salgado, the party decided to appoint a technocrat at the top of the IDA, Don Jorge Elizondo, who served as Executive President from July 1984 to July 1986. The Government also decided to "intervene" in the IDA's Executive Board and to appoint new members. Jorge Elizondo chose for a low-profile policy. President Monge's government suffered a serious loss of prestige towards the end of his regime due to a number of political scandals, and the ambitious goal of resolving the 'agrarian problem' was pushed into the background. The new policy of the IDA was directed towards the rationalization of resources and towards supporting existing programmes.²¹

Not surprisingly then, the new Executive President was soon confronted with multiple internal and external pressures in the form of political demands from peasant unions and politicians, and demands for higher salaries from the IDA's unions. At the same time Don Roberto Arcos' rival Jesús Chávez, Head of the Credit Fund, started to discredit Arcos by accusing him of attempting to isolate the O34 Programme from the rest of the institution. Jorge Elizondo, well-aware of the importance of the O34 Programme for the relationship with USAID, established contact with John Smith. Elizondo was disturbed by the accusations from Celis that Arcos and the USAID consultant had conspired against him. But John Smith, as always, supported Don Roberto Arcos without hesitation.

At this rather unfavourable conjuncture it became clear to Roberto Arcos that his major trump was the O34 Programme and its effect for the rest of the institution. As he put it, "Don Jorge Elizondo realized that he needed my experience in order to finish the Programme". Yet, the power balance in those days tilted towards Jesús Chaves, who sought for opportunities to undermine Arcos' authority within the Programme and the institution, and thereby to further isolate him.²²

Then, Arcos saw an opportunity to impart a blow to his rivals. He chose to make public a study made by one of his assistants which concluded that the best way to rationalize resources was by setting limits to the excessive use of institution vehicles within the capital. He argued that the vehicles should be used in the field and not as personal cars for staff in the capital city. To that effect he received the explicit support from Elizondo to reorganize the IDA's transport fleet. Don Roberto's first act was to order the Programme vehicle assigned to Jesús Chávez, as Head of the Credit Fund, to

²¹This new "technocratic" approach was to remain during the next Presidency as Oscar Arias clearly did not see the 'agrarian question' as an important issue. His battle horse was housing.

²²Referring to his problems with Don Jesús Chávez, Don Roberto Arcos commented, "I was not interested in a frontal confrontation. In an open confrontation I could have eliminated the entire opposition, but not without sacrificing the whole programme. The only thing I was interested in was leading the programme to an acceptable conclusion. Meanwhile the USAID consultant and myself administered the Credit Fund from a distance".

be returned to the programme in order to be sent to the field. Don Jesús just refused to follow the order. In the face of this resistance Arcos decided to use the break down lorry to remove the cars. This move, however, backfired and Chávez created a huge fuss and succeeded in recovering his vehicle. Moreover, he accused Arcos of political persecution.

At the end of Monge's term, at the beginning of 1986, a memorandum was sent to the Presidency accusing Don Roberto Arcos of organizing political persecution against other party members within the IDA. In addition, mention was made of a lawsuit against him due to an accident he (Don Roberto) had had a few months previously while driving an institute vehicle. It was argued that in that accident he had injured a woman and in the aftermath had shown little humanitarian feeling towards her, "a typical characteristic of his Machiavellian style". It was clear to Don Roberto that his opponents had set this law suit in motion. (In fact the accident took place in Cartago, the stronghold of Jesús Chávez). Arcos now felt in serious trouble. The memorandum had been sent to the President as an open letter and had the signature of the representatives of the institution's unions, both worker and professional.

Don Roberto Arcos becomes IDA's General Manager, but the struggle continues

Don Roberto Arcos then decided to concentrate all his efforts on the Presidential campaign in favour of Oscar Arias, the *Liberación* candidate. He took unpaid leave and left for Limón, a province where *Liberación* lacked able politicians. In the middle of 1986, after the election victory of Oscar Arias, the decision of the judges was made public and he was completely absolved of any blame in the accident. He then saw an opportunity to strike a blow. Soon a document supporting him was released with the signatures of a majority of the IDA employees. In this document - which was produced by his close collaborators - distance was taken from the actions taken against him by the representatives of the workers' and professionals' union. They were accused of acting without the consent union members. One week later the heads of the unions resigned.

Apparently Don Roberto Arcos was able to muster support from a wider group within the institution thanks to his good relationship with the newly-elected President, Oscar Arias. In effect, the President made it clear in a letter addressed to the Executive Board that he had full confidence in Don Roberto. It was for no one a surprise that the new IDA Executive President, Don Sergio Quiroz, appointed by Oscar Arias after his election, chose Don Roberto Arcos as the new General Manager of the entire institute. That was in 1986.²³ However, Don Roberto's problems were not over, as a year later this institutional conflict was again reflected in the election of a Regional Director in the Atlantic zone. This became another arena of struggle in which his opponents sought revenge.

The post of Regional Director in the Atlantic zone was the next step in implementing a new organisational framework which aimed to implement a radical decentralization programme. In Arcos' view the O34 Programme had been successful in finding new ways to delegate authority to the regional level. It was important, then, to appoint a Regional Director who was committed to this strategy of decentralization. The most suited for this post appeared to be the Head of the Neguev Settlement,

²³His rival Jesús Chávez had also been campaigning for Oscar Arias in his home area and he had also aspirations to become General Manager, but he lacked a reputation as a skillful administrator.

Fernando Campos, his most devoted supporter in the Atlantic zone.²⁴ However, Arcos had great difficulty in getting him appointed. He recalls that he had to use all his political connections within and outside the institution. The rival group, led by Jesús Chávez, proposed various candidates so as to stop this particular appointment. But Roberto Arcos rejected every negotiation, for he was convinced that Fernando Campos was the best candidate. Yet, it created a very unpleasant situation for him, as the main contender to Fernando Campos was a good political friend. He had to talk to him and tell him that he could not support him since he thought Fernando Campos was the more capable.

Furthermore, Jesús Chávez started a campaign to discredit Fernando Campos by spreading the rumour that he was a former member of the opposition party Unidad, and arguing that he had made no contribution in the Atlantic zone to the election of President Arias. They called upon the MP's of the Limón Province and the Executive President of the IDA, arguing that it was a scandal that such a high position be given to someone who could not be trusted. Thus a rather difficult situation arose as Arcos had to place his entire political reputation on the block in order to refute these accusations.

Key views underlying Don Roberto Arcos' institutional project

As we saw, it was a long way for Don Roberto Arcos to become General Manager of the IDA. In fact, when he arrived at the institute as a petrol engineer with little knowledge about land issues, he did not aspire to that position. Yet, his involvement in the O34 Programme caused him to develop a strong commitment to a particular institutional project. This institutional project included the view that the problems in the countryside could only be resolved in an integrated way and that power should be delegated to the regions. The idea underlying this approach was that only in this way could settlers be encouraged to become entrepreneurial farmers.

It can be argued that these ideas were implied in the integrated rural development approach. However, it would be simplistic to argue that Don Roberto Arcos just internalized the underlying assumptions implied in this approach. On the contrary, as I argue in Chapter 3, in the process of implementing the O34 Programme, Arcos appropriated such assumptions in such a way that they fitted in his wider understanding of how an institution ought to function. In this respect his views diverged much from those of the USAID programme designers.²⁵ The clear improvement in the implementation effectiveness after delegating power to the regions, subsequent to his alliance with the Settlement Heads of the O34 Programme, convinced him that the necessary knowledge and skills for undertaking land reform activities could only be generated through the practice of programme implementation. In our last conversations he told me that he realised that during the period that he had been involved in the O34 Programme (first as advisor, later as Programme Manager and finally as IDA's General Manager) he had been spending too much of his energy fighting

²⁴An important reason for choosing Fernando Campos was that at the time he was becoming involved in *Liberacionista* politics in the province of Limon, in the Atlantic zone. In effect, Fernando Campos' political involvement was important to Don Roberto Arcos as the Limon province was his political base.

²⁵Don Roberto was adamant that politics was an important and necessary part of policy, but that it should be conducted in a 'dignified' way. He also believed that a fundamental discussion on IDA's role should be held. Interestingly, he identified two possible views on IDA's role; first, as an emissary of the state in the countryside, or second, as an instrument of change. He also suggested that the first conception was defended by Don Francisco Salazar, IDA's former head of the Training and Organisation. It must be mentioned that Don Roberto held Salazar in high regard. For reasons of space I do not examine further Don Roberto's views.

rivals of his own party. He resented having received so little support from most of the Departments in the Institute.

This institutional conflict, however, was not merely a struggle for power between two factions. It is my contention that it was underwritten by conflicting conceptualizations of rural development. Thus, in Don Roberto's view regional decentralization and an integrated approach were necessary in order to resolve the problems of IDA beneficiaries. As he put it,

"We have to offer the settlers the necessary conditions in order to enable them to become entrepreneurial producers. This will take place in several phases. First they produce for local markets and for their own consumption. Then they should produce for international markets. But in order to make of them entrepreneurial farmers we have to create for them the necessary conditions: housing, infrastructure and other production conditions. This requires that their problem should be approached in an integrated way".

Thus two topics were critical in Don Roberto Arcos' institutional project: his problems in implementing a regional decentralization plan and his view of the settler as a client which the institution had the obligation to service. Underlying these views was that semi-directed colonisation was no longer a viable strategy due to the exhaustion of the agrarian frontier.

It is interesting to note that within Don Roberto Arcos' project a particular model of the farmer as a client played a major role. His view was that the client should be provided with a package of services in order to become an entrepreneurial farmer. Yet, this did not entail for him that IDA should be depoliticized. What he propounded was that regional directors should be shielded from national politics. In this way they could better concentrate on implementation activities. He was indeed aware of the necessity for regional directors to participate in regional politics, since they had to coordinate with members of parliament, and with the politically appointed heads of other institutions.

Thus Don Roberto Arcos did not hold to the view that politics should be eradicated from the institution altogether. In his view this was not only impossible but also unwanted. He saw land reform throughout as a political activity, since too many important decisions were made which affected the interests of so many groups. It is important to stress this here for I argue in Chapter 3 that the USAID approach as manifested in the O34 Programme went much further and implied the depoliticization of the entire IDA. In Don Roberto Arcos' view the advantage of the integrated rural development approach was that the implementation process could be shielded off from political interference. In Chapter 3 the relationship between implementation and institutional politics is studied in the Neguev settlement. There I will examine how this USAID inspired attempt to change client-institution relationships worked out in practice.

2.4 Conclusion

It has been argued that institutional projects are based on manager's problematizations and on their personal commitment to a particular political project. An institutional project consists of a set of tactics and stratagems for dealing with ongoing problems, together with a number of rationalisations by which managers define such problems in such a way that they become manageable. It has also been argued that institutional projects leave traces in particular sites within an institution, such as departments,

regional offices, etc., and that they may become important elements of an institution's memory. An institutional project, then, is not a mental construct determining state manager's behaviour but is itself changeable and remarkably loose and pragmatic, even though the socio-political commitments of institutional managers might be strict. In fact, it can be argued that institutional projects are shaped, adapted and transformed through practices of governability involving a variety of tactics such as negotiating, establishing coalitions, neutralizing (potential) rivals, enrolling third parties, but also the fine game of 'foul play' or as they call it in Costa Rica 'sawing the floor beneath your feet' (*serruchar pisos*).

On the basis of the foregoing account I distinguished three different institutional projects; To begin with, the anti-interventionist project of Don Antonio Salgado who held to a view of the settler as an individualistic character able to open for him/herself an innovative path to progress. Second, the incorporationist project of Francisco Salazar who conceptualized the settler as a client who had to be incorporated into the national institutional and political structure. And third, the transformationalist project of Don Roberto Arcos who took the view that it was the institution's task to provide the settler with the conditions for becoming a successful rural entrepreneur through an integrated rural development approach.

For the anti-interventionist project, the primary task of the institution was considered to be the distribution of land to peasants in the most efficacious and cost-effective way, while refusing to engage in political negotiations with "pressure groups". The institution was seen as an instrument for achieving this goal and all activities had to be subordinated to the objective of distributing land. The evolving institutional project was, accordingly, perceived as authoritarian, as decision-making was Salgado's prerogative and little autonomy was left to Department Heads. Regarding client-institution relationships he maintained that paternalism could be averted by avoiding further engagement in local developmental activities after the land had been delivered to settlers. This should be the task of other institutions. Not surprisingly Don Antonio Salgado lost much support within - and outside the institution -, especially among those who argued that the IDA should not only 'distribute poverty' but also ensure that the necessary production conditions be provided to the settlers for becoming commercial farmers. As we saw before this was also the view of an academician close to USAID (Seligson). Neither was Don Antonio Salgado popular among peasant unions.

The populist-incorporationist project, in contrast, was intent on expanding the clientele through a network of local organizations (cooperatives, development associations, etc.) which would play the role of intermediaries between state and peasantry, of course, with the practical assistance of state officials. Within this project the IDA was to become part of a wider institutional effort to reach peasants, and accordingly coordination was sought with other client-oriented institutions such as the National Cooperative Organisation, DINADECO (*Dirección Nacional de Cooperativas*). The issue of institutional autonomy so dear to Don Antonio Salgado, if posed at all, would in this approach be viewed within the context of the broader project of expanding the state's and parties' clientele. Relationships were established with individual settlers, with 'grassroots' organizations and even with peasant unions supported by the *Liberación* party, definitely not with leftist peasant unions which were seen as competitors. This approach enabled Francisco Salazar to become immensely popular among front-line workers, not only those who operated in the regional offices but also those who operated from San José. Moreover, client-orientedness implied a labour-intensive approach, which gave him the opportunity to expand his social base within the institution. His institutional project, then, was viewed as being less authoritarian and more participative than that of his competitor Don Antonio Salgado.

Institutional optimality was not defined in terms of "how much would it cost to provide a settler with enough land for him to survive" but in terms of "how much meaningful action has been undertaken to improve the livelihood conditions of the settlers, in addition to giving them land". In this view the institution then was seen as providing the necessary political and organizational space for handling the conflictive nature of the agrarian question.

Lastly, the transformationalist approach was wary of any political activity by clients, given the explosive nature of institution-client relationships in the Atlantic zone, where the O34 Programme was implemented. The institutional project associated with it was a direct result of the attempts to introduce the integrated rural development model into the institution. We have seen in the case study of Don Roberto Arcos that this was not at all easy as there was substantial resistance within the institute to the way in which he attempted to bring the O34 Programme to a satisfactory end. Such an approach propounded a territorial notion through regional decentralization in order to ensure a maximum of coordination capacity, thereby introducing a distinct hierarchical principle at the regional level. We saw that Don Roberto Arcos received most support from the Regional Directors in the Atlantic zone. The support Don Roberto Arcos received from USAID was crucial. His approach was experienced by many bureaucrats in the IDA's headquarters in San José as technocratic and authoritarian. Yet, his approach entailed that new opportunities were created for able and ambitious officials, such as Settlement Heads, at the regional level.

It is interesting to note that Don Antonio Salgado in defending his anti-interventionist approach referred to new and presumably progressive colonization areas, for instance in the North. The group around Francisco Salazar, instead, would refer to areas where land pressure was high, where outmigration took place, and where the agrarian question played an important political role in regional, mainstream, politics. The transformationalist approach was devised in the Atlantic zone, a conflictive area where leftist parties and unions enjoyed traditionally much support among (ex)-plantation workers.

In a way, each institutional project was to some extent based on a partial understanding of the multiple realities of institutional life. Indeed, it must be stressed that no institutional project was able to cater to the contrasting interests and aspirations of the diverse sets of social actors it had to deal with. Yet, it must be noted that, at least at some point in time, they constituted viable and credible options as modes of institutional management. It could be argued then that elements of these institutional projects survived in specific institutional practices, thereby contributing to the failure of any attempt to restructure the institution according to a pre-determined model, as in the case of the O34 Programme.

But what are the implications of a focus on institutional projects for our understanding of the role of planned intervention for state-peasant relations? Or, in other words, how can a focus on institutional dynamics shed light on the (in)ability of the state to shape the lives of peasants?

Final analysis

It is my argument that an institutional analysis in terms of struggles between competing institutional styles leads to a different view of the IDA from the existing ones. Such an analysis contradicts two common critical views of the institution. The first view (see Barahona Riera 1980; Araya Pochet 1982) argues that the institution was stillborn as an agrarian reform agency and that it served only to 'extinguish fires' (*apagaincendios*). According to the second view (Rovira Mas, 1987; Roy Rivera 1987) the IDA was set up as an apparatus of social control through a set of strategies of intermediation. In this

line of thought the IDA is anything but inefficient. Indeed, it is seen as relatively successful in securing the reproduction of the dominant political and economic system.

The first view, which argues that the role of the IDA has been of little consequence as it has been unable to carry out a serious agrarian reform is not consistent. Thus it assumes that the institution's objectives should be a radical transformation of the agrarian structure on behalf of the peasantry by intervening in landownership relations. However, as we saw in the case studies, such objectives are not those of the main institutional actor's. Thus, this view blames the institution for failing to accomplish what it never set out to do.

The absence of a more radical approach, then, is not due to the institution's lack of will (as we have seen there have been proponents within the institution of radical agrarian reform) but has to do with the political system which has kept agrarian reform out of its agenda. On the other hand, IDA's activities have had definite effects on important sections of the rural population - for instance in creating expectations -, even if this has not entailed widespread land distribution. One problem with studies working within this line of thought is that they show little interest in the actual functioning of the institution. In short, the main problem with this argument is that it holds to a structural view of the state and then goes on to apply it to an institutional analysis.

On the other hand, we have a more interesting argument which sees the IDA as having an intermediation function, interesting in that it pays more attention to the institutional dynamics. We find two different views within this thesis. A common leftist view sees the IDA as a manipulator, an instrument of the elite in scaling down agrarian conflicts by prompt intervention. The problem with this view, however, is that it bestows too much efficiency to the institution in achieving its Machiavellian goals. After all most functionaries are working on specialized tasks. Manipulating relationships with beneficiaries is not a central task for them but a requirement for being able to carry out extension, building roads and drawing maps, extending titles, etc. At the same time this view is naive insofar as it confers on the state a power which it never had; it underestimates the capacity of peasant groups and individual beneficiaries, themselves, to question the institution and thereby to influence its functioning. Indeed, as we saw in the case studies, the ability of clients and political groups to pressure the institution and thereby to influence the dynamics of the institution is quite large. Here we see that a conception of the state is applied that sees it as the instrument of a dominant social class.

On the right (and this is a common view in the major Costa Rican newspapers) a similar type of critique is expounded, with the difference being that the IDA is seen as an instrument of populist groups (especially within the *Liberación* party) which use it for electoral purposes. After all, it is argued, is there a better way to win the allegiance of people than by giving them land?. The proponents of such a view clearly do not believe that agrarian reform can be combined with the modernization of agriculture and argue that the IDA is only 'distributing poverty'. In this view the IDA is an instrument of irresponsible and populist political elites.

A less conspiratory and more complex argument would be a Skocpolian (Skocpol 1979) kind of analysis focusing on the role of institutional actors in shaping rural society. Social control is then defined, not as an activity on behalf of a dominant social class but as a necessary institutional requirement for reaching its goals. These can be defined as the will to modernize the agrarian sector while avoiding major political turmoils. Institutional leaders, in this view, are depicted as politically skilled bureaucrats attempting to reach technocratic aims. This, essentially Weberian thesis, draws on a view of the state as a powerful organisation aiming to control people and territory in order to carry out a sort of historical project. State centralization and bureaucratization

are central elements within such a state rationality. In Chapter 5 I will critically discuss this view as it has been put forward by Grindle (1986) for the Latin American case.

My approach, however, is different. In this chapter I have argued that a better understanding of institutional life can be reached by viewing it as shaped by a sequence of conflicting institutional projects and their interactions than of analysing official policies. It was also argued that such institutional projects left their imprint in often strategic locations of an organisation in the form of a variety of work conceptions, and practical knowledge of how to cope with everyday situations. This in turn entailed that the plurality of institutional outlooks does not exclude the possibility that a dominant institutional project might impose widespread institutional change. Yet, the fact remains that all attempts to impose novel ways of conceptualizing and dealing with a changing agrarian problematic are fraught with contradictions due to the limited capacity of even very powerful actors to shape the multiple realities of institutional life. This, I think, has important implication for how we look at institutions. Thus, instead of conceptualizing institutions in terms of official policy or as instruments of classes, or as the instruments of some bureaucratic logic, it is proposed to focus on how institutional practices are shaped in a variety of arenas of struggle, some of which lie outside the institutional realm. Such a perspective on institutions, then, can be seen as providing a series of (sometimes contradictory) views on, and ways of dealing with particular problematics.²⁶

The next two chapters will concentrate on front-line workers, the state representatives in the field. One major conclusion in chapter 3 is that there is little sense in developing a general theory of implementation. Instead it is better to focus on the administrative process where determinate conceptions of the clients and labelling practices are sustained.

1945	Costa Rican Civil War
1953-58	José Figueres (Liberación Nacional)
1958-62	Mario Echandi (Unión Nacional)
1962-66	Francisco Orlich (Liberación Nacional)
1966-70	José Joaquín Trejos (Unificación Nacional)
1970-74	Figueres (Liberación Nacional)
1974-78	Daniel Oduber ((Liberación Nacional)
1978-82	Rodrigo Carazo (Unidad Nacional)
1982-86	Luis Alberto Monge (Liberación Nacional)
1986-90	Oscar Arias (Liberación Nacional)

Table 2.1 Costa Rican Presidents since 1945

²⁶Batley (1983) comes to a similar conclusion when arguing that the state's structural limits to change are not external to state organisations but internal to administrative practice. As he puts it, "Organisations are thus conceived, on the one hand, as products of a definition of reality, and on the other hand "as principal agents in the social construction of reality, providing an inventory of legitimate logics and axioms, and a repository of acceptable vocabularies, legitimate motives and laudable ambitions" (idem, p.20).

1961	Foundation of the IDA
1961-66	First term Antonio Salgado as IDA's President Executive
1974-78	Francisco Salazar forms department of Organisation and Training and appoints followers all over IDA (among them Jesús Chávez)
1976-78	Second term Antonio Salgado as President Executive. He dismisses leftist group of IDA functionaries, also Francisco Salazar
1980	The 034 Programme is initiated
1981	Juan Celis is appointed Implementation Manager
1981	John Smith is appointed USAID consultant for the IDA
1982-84	Antonio Salgado's third term as IDA's Executive Director
1982	Roberto Arcos is appointed Programme Advisor for the 034 Programme
1982	Jesus Chavez is appointed Head of the Credit Fund
1983	Fernando Campos is appointed Head of the Neguev settlement, the Credit Fund starts extending credit in large amounts
1984	Antonio Salgado confronts agrarian crisis, and in July he resigns from the IDA
1984	Roberto Arcos is appointed 034 Programme Manager with the help of John Smith and Settlement Heads
1984	Jorge Elizondo is appointed IDA's President Executive
1985	Roberto Arcos attempts to break opposition within the IDA
1986	Roberto Arcos is accused of immoral behaviour and political harassment
1986	Roberto Arcos is appointed IDA's General Manager

Table 2.2 Important events for the IDA and the 034 programme since 1961

CHAPTER 3

THE MODEL OF THE CLIENT AND THE IDEOLOGY OF INTERVENTION

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter we obtained a view of the various power struggles taking place in the IDA, and the O34 Programme was already introduced as an arena of conflict in which different institutional projects competed. The impression might, then, have been created that state intervention is primarily shaped at the level of policy. In this chapter a shift of perspective will take place and the O34 Programme will be examined from the point of view of those who were expected to carry out policy guidelines and decisions. A new set of social actors will be introduced: the front-line workers and their direct superiors (the Regional Director and the Interim Head of the Neguev Settlement). These are the actors who are immersed in the everyday reality of implementation.

The chapter consists of three parts. First, the geographical setting of the Neguev Regional Office will be outlined and in presenting an introduction to administrative life I proceed with a description of a number of locales in which the administrative process takes place. Second, a description of administrative life as a fragmentary and contingent reality will be given. Third, the genealogy of the model of the 'client', as a central element in an ideology of intervention, is presented. It is argued that this model is the outcome of an attempt by USAID planners to depoliticize institution-client relations. It will also be shown that this model of the 'client' is related to a particular, authoritative, representation of Costa Rican agrarian history. Finally, I show that the model is transformed in the process of implementation into the model of the 'undeserving client' with which front-line workers and administrators confront beneficiaries.

3.2 The Neguev Regional Office and Social Locales

The local setting

The Neguev regional office is located in the Neguev settlement, and was founded in 1987. Prior to that it was a Settlement Office of the O34 Programme (from 1980 to 1987). It covers five settlements with a total area of 12,724 has. and 1,294 settlers. Besides Neguev (5,340 has.) the regional office services the settlements of Agrimaga,

Florida, Made and Tierragrande. In the latter settlement the case studies of Chapters 7 and 8 are located.

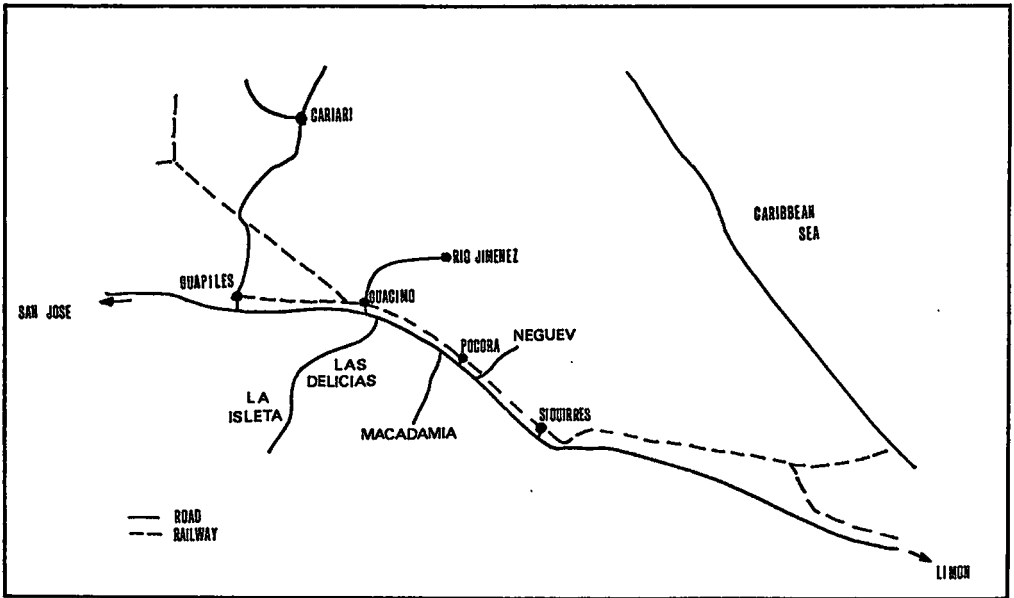


Figure 3.1 Schematic map of the area studied

The Neguev settlement is situated in the northern part of the Atlantic zone, north of the Siquirres-Pocora railroad line, between the Reventazón river on the east and the Destierro river on the west. About a fifth of Neguev's total area of 5340 has. lies north of the Parismina river. Its geography is quite complex as it is traversed by various streams and swamps. The quality of the soil varies, but for the main part it is poor. Along the rivers there are excellent soils derived from recent alluvium and volcanic deposits which are suited for sustained permanent agriculture with perennial crops. Such soils can be found in the La Lucha (officially called Santa Rosa), Milano and Bellavista sectors of the settlement. The other two sectors, those of El Silencio and El Peje by contrast, contain the poorest soils. Neguev includes a forest reserve in the latter sector.

The regional office lies at a distance of 110 kilometers from San José, and 15 kilometers down a secondary road which turns off from the main San José-Limón highway shortly after Pocora. Neguev is connected by inner roads to the villages of Cairo to the south and, on the other side of the river, to Rio Jiménez and Santa Rosa. Larger urban areas are Siquirres to the south and Guápiles to the north.

Neguev, before becoming a settlement, was a *hacienda* devoted mainly to beef cattle breeding and fattening; one of the largest ranches in the Atlantic zone. It belonged to a USA-Panamanian who subsequently sold it to a Costa Rican entrepreneur from San José. Apparently the latter neglected the farm, which may have encouraged its invasion in 1978 by a group of squatters under the guidance of the UPAGRA peasant union (*Unión de Pequeños Agricultores del Atlántico*). In 1979, after an agreement was reached between UPAGRA and the IDA, a rival peasant union, SPPAL (*Sindicato de Pequeños Productores del Atlántico*), invaded the pastures of the Milano sector where the IDA's Regional Office is now located.

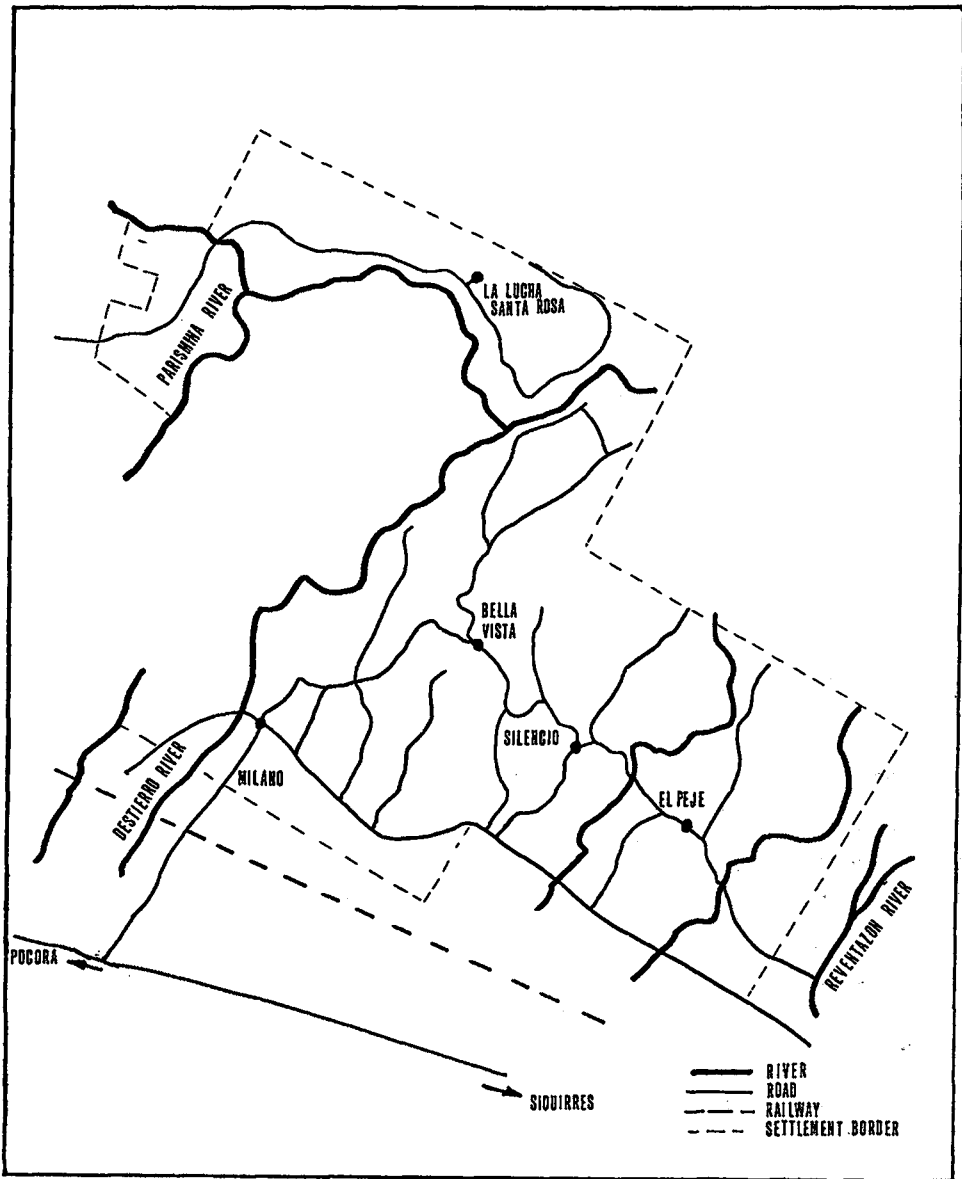


Figure 3.2 Schematic map of the Neguev settlement

This situation lasted until 1980, when the 034 Programme started and the IDA's presence became widespread all over the settlement. The settlement has been divided into 311 plots, varying from 10 has. on the most fertile soils, to 17 has. on the poorest soils. The IDA's intervention was massive and was directed towards converting the settlement into a demonstration project.

Next, before discussing the administrative context of the Neguev office I will make a few remarks on the settlements it services.

Some remarks on the settlement population

Regarding the settler population in Neguev, it has been already stated in Chapter 1 that mobility after the invasion has been very high and that by 1986 more than half of the plots had changed ownership, at least once. The actual number of families in the settlement exceeds the number of plots due to subdivisions, and amounts to 425.¹ Female-headed households are exceptions. I counted only 6 of them in the whole settlement, mostly widowers or divorcees. Thirty six percent of the plot owners do not live on the farm. This large percentage of absenteeism consists largely of individuals who live in urban areas (20% of the plot owners come from the capital city San José), and who leave the farm in charge of a *cuidandero*, or a guard. It is also common for families to own two or more plots, which are registered under the name of sons or relatives. Absentee ownership is reflected in the large number of farms where only cattle is raised, especially in the sectors of El Peje and El Silencio. Indeed, cattle raising is an indication that the farmer does not depend on the farm for his livelihood, as it is considered that in order for a small family to subsist at least 40 heads of cattle are necessary. Most Neguev farmers do not reach such a number, the more as a plot of 10 - 20 has. will not suffice for so many animals. Of the total farm area 56% is under grass, and only 16% is cultivated with crops.² The rest of the farm area consists of brush and secondary forest. It must be noted that absentee ownership, unequal distribution of land and differential access to resources is even more marked in the Tierragrande settlement where goods roads necessary for transporting farm produce are lacking.

It is not surprising, then that, as argued in Chapter 1, issues of cooperation and community are experienced as problematic in these settlements. Settlers live dispersed on the farms and the distance to the community centres where the schools, churches and shops are located might be quite large. The community centres were intended to be the location of farmers houses, but few plot owners decided to move there as long as some basic services such as light and running water were not provided. In fact, community centres in Neguev are largely inhabited by landless peasant families.

When in need of help farmers go to their neighbours. Beyond, they draw upon social networks which transcend the settlement and which are largely based on family ties. Farmers usually do their main shopping and search for distraction in the villages of Pocora, Siquirres, Germania, Guácimo or Guápiles, along the railway. In fact, the dispersed location of farms and absentee ownership has led to an absence of 'village life' which is regretted by most farmers and which makes attempts to organise forms of 'community cooperation' tiresome. It seems that the evangelical churches are the only forms of local organisation which have been able to expand their social bases.

Again, this lack of village life is even more marked in Tierragrande where the community centres have less services to offer and where it is often difficult, due to the rains, to travel on the roads. Furthermore, many settlers there choose to leave their families in the lowlands, especially in case of illness or when the children are old enough to attend secondary school (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Finally a remark on the ethnic composition of the settlements. Since only 12% of the settler population in Neguev is originary from Limón there is a marked discrepancy between Neguev and the surrounding villages. The same holds for Tierragrande. In fact,

¹The data used in this section comes from a survey conducted by the titling department of the IDA in march 1986.

²Of the cultivated area 9.73 % (83 has) was cocoa, 59.3% maize (504 has), 4.3% cassave, 5.5% citrics, 14.8% ayote, chile, cucumber, and others.

in Neguev there was only one black settler family at the time of my research and in Tierragrande none. Hence, the local black Jamaican culture is hardly represented in these settlements.

The administrative organisation of the Neguev office

Basically, activities in the Regional Office in Neguev are determined by two of the three components of the O34 Programme: Agricultural Asset Redistribution and Increased Tenure Security (see Chapter 1, p.6).³

In practical terms these Programme components involved two areas of activity;

- 1) the promotion of agricultural development via the supply of credit and the provision of extension, and
- 2) the achievement of effective control in the settlement through the regulation of access to land. This, it must be noted was a generally accepted, though not openly admitted objective of the O34 Programme, and it was never explicitly stated in IDA or O34 Programme documents. However, policy makers such as Don Antonio Salgado, Don Roberto Arcos, or the influential USAID advisor, John Smith, would not make a secret of the fact that the Programme was also directed to the normalization of social relations between squatters and the state in conflictive areas such as Neguev⁴.

In Chapter 6 I will elaborate on the contradictions which arose between the objectives underlying these two areas of activity. Here it suffices to observe that administrative process in Neguev consists of two types of tasks. First, those tasks which are carried out by the legal unit, the unit responsible for land issues and which has mainly a regulation function, and second, those by the agricultural extension unit and the credit unit (*caja agraria*), which have agricultural development functions. Extension was provided since the beginning of the O34 Programme for the following 'old' Agricultural Development Activities: animal husbandry (González and his assistant Michel), cocoa (Jiménez and his assistants Gordon and Gordillo), root and tubers (Jiménez), maize (Rodríguez), species and medicinal plants (Lozano), pejibaye or palm heart (Gamba) and forestry (Gordon). Some *técnicos*⁵ are chief extensionists in one activity and assistants in another, while some chief extensionists are in charge of more than one activity. Later on, by the end of the O34 Programme came the following 'new' Agricultural Activities: chili and pineapple (Lozano), and passion fruit or *maracuya* (Rodríguez).

³These Programme components include the following activities: a) land acquisition, b) land adjudication, c) road construction d) the construction of community and administrative facilities (schools, community meeting halls, health and nutrition centres, stores, administrative offices), e) settler orientation and training, f) agricultural development g) a credit programme.

⁴In fact, the two other settlements were also former invaded *haciendas*. Furthermore, IDA intervention in the Atlantic zone has to be seen in relation to attempts by the state to stimulate export production in the area. IDA tasks, such as colonization and the resolution of conflicts over land, were central in providing the basic conditions of social stability for making such a policy feasible.

⁵A *técnico* is an official who has had an education in a technical/agricultural area and who deals with farmers both in the field and in the administrative domain. In Neguev only two of the *técnicos* have a university degree: the extensionist in charge of the cocoa and tuber programmes (Jiménez) and the veterinary officer (González). The extensionist in charge of the medicinal plants, species and pineapple programmes (Lozano), is working on his thesis. The other *técnicos* have followed a few years university or technical training after finishing the agrarian secondary school.

The social worker or *promotor social* (Mario Green) straddles both types of tasks - those of agricultural development and social control - as he has to channel settlers' initiatives through organisational modes approved by the institution. In the process he is supposed to struggle against initiatives and forms of organisation set up by elements with a 'negative' disposition towards the institution.

The following positions can be distinguished in the Regional Office, with the names of the incumbents in italics:

Head of Settlement and Regional Director <i>Fernando Campos</i> Interim Head of Settlement <i>Hugo Paz</i>				
Administ. Unit	Credit Unit	Extension	Training and Org. Unit	Legal Unit
Assistant <i>Mateo</i>	Supervisor <i>Villegas</i> Cashier <i>Braga</i>	Agr. Dev. Programmes Maize <i>Rodriguez</i> Cocoa <i>Jiménez</i> Animal Hus. <i>González</i> Med. plants Spices <i>Lozano</i> Pejibaye <i>Gamba</i> Coconut <i>Gamba</i> Forestry <i>Gordon</i> Chili <i>Lozano</i> Pineapple <i>Lozano</i> Maracuya <i>Rodriguez</i>	Social Worker <i>Green</i>	Agrarista <i>Knight</i> Assistant <i>Ramos</i>

Figure 3.3 Organizational Chart of the IDA office in Neguev in 1987

In addition there are other professionally unqualified personnel such as cleaners, guards, store-keepers, the repairman, drivers, etc. working in the Neguev office.

Next, the task environment of the personnel of the Neguev regional office will be discussed with special emphasis on social interaction within specific locales.

The Neguev regional office

The Neguev Regional Office was built according to a standard design for all the settlements belonging to the Programme. The entrance hall is also the room where the secretaries work and it serves at the same time as the waiting room for clients. The Regional Director's room is at the left side and the extensionists' room behind, the largest room, separated from the waiting room by a hall and a glass window. Within there are two rows of desks for the *técnicos*. There are two more working rooms at the right hand side of the building, one for the legal and administrative assistants and one for the credit officials. This last room has a window that communicates with the waiting room. Behind the secretaries' place, and adjoining the extension room there stands a radio-transmitter on a desk. This radio transmits all day conversations held between Headquarters in San José, the settlement offices in the Atlantic zone, and the cars of the settlement heads. It must be noted that the social worker has no room for himself. He fulfills his administrative tasks in the extensionists' room.

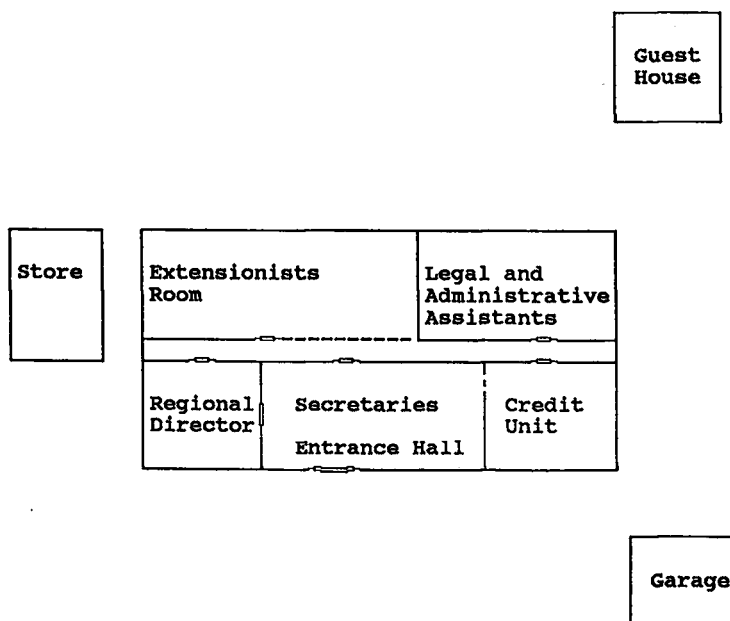


Figure 3.4 Plan of the IDA regional office in Neguev

On a working day the secretaries will sit at their writing tables in the waiting hall, usually typing internal memos, letters to clients and to other institutions. They also operate the radio-transmitter and attend to visitors. They have the largest physical presence in the office and to some degree play a 'gatekeeper's' role. It is both for front-line workers and settlers useful to entertain good relationships with them. This applied to me as well since they were able to give me tips as to where to contact someone, or to convey tactical (e.g. on the bureaucratic agenda) and even substantial information

(e.g. on the existence of programme documents, etc.). One of the secretaries supports the *técnicos* whereas the other works exclusively for the regional director.

Given the importance of written communication in the bureaucratic administrative domain the efficiency of an official may depend on his relationship with the secretaries. Communication between the Regional Office and departments at Headquarters takes place by notes or cables called "IDAGRAMAS". Style is formal and bureaucratic. Official rebukes are also sent by memoranda or notes. Often these do not address in the first instance the official but are formulated in a general sense. Such notes can be used as weapons in conflicts between the regional office and a particular department, as was the case in a conflict between the Neguev office and the Credit Fund in San José. On the other hand, personal notes are sent in order to show that the Regional Office is acting against some irregularity that in the view of Fernando Campos, the Regional Director, is being tolerated by the respective department. Finally they may be used as a warning to call an individual to order.

Settlers who want to talk to an official usually wait in the waiting room until they are given permission to enter one of the other rooms. However, as there is more face-to-face contact with some settlers than with others, particular individuals have acquired 'customary' rights to move in the precincts. That is especially the case with some pro-institution leaders but it also occurs in the case of a few 'troublesome' settlers. Some characters have established excellent relationships with the secretaries, and spend the time they have to wait before a meeting with an official chatting with them. The secretaries are therefore ready to do various secretarial favours like typing letters for them and giving them 'useful' information. They might even 'arrange' important meetings by finding gaps in the agenda. In general, however, the secretaries avoid these kinds of relationships with settlers, for as one of them explained to me, "if we are too helpful we would end up being the secretaries of all settlers". The secretaries' attitude towards the settlers is always respectful and correct. There is little notice of any air of superiority on their part, especially as one of the two is a settler's daughter and wife. In the waiting room settlers and officials intermingle in a semi-official way. On Friday, the 'office day' (the day when Neguev officials stay in the office and receive settlers), this room is filled with settlers, but during the week there are few of them. With regard to the other rooms some are more private than others. The most secluded is the Regional Director's, then come the credit unit and the legal/administrative rooms and then the extensionists' room which is a more accessible place for settlers. In fact if a settler comes to talk to a particular extensionist he will often be told by the secretary to look for him inside. He/she will be able to see if the extensionist is busy with someone else through the glass window. Once in this room the settler will be asked to sit down at a desk and the conversation will begin. A characteristic of interaction between *técnico* and settlers within the office is that it is bounded by distinct rules. However, as we will see later, some clients have easier access to the office and to officials than others, thanks to their skills in negotiating access.

With regard to the other rooms it is not much different. Someone coming with a credit issue can see whether the officials are present or not by looking through the window. If they are there he can sit down and wait for his/her turn. If they are not, they will have to ask the secretary whether they are in the field or just lingering around. By no means are settlers allowed to walk in, since money is being administered there. In the case of the legal/administrative units, they must be shown in by the secretary, the main reason for this being that legal issues are considered to be highly private. Finally, the regional director's room is off bounds. It is not easy to have an interview with him, not only because the irregularity of his presence but also because of the scarcity of his time. However, if anyone insists on an interview with the Regional

Director or with his substitute, the Interim Head of the Settlement, they will be received, only it may take a long time before they are shown in. More than in the other locales, it is the Regional Director who decides who, when and for how long he is going to receive a client. Furthermore, he is the person who finishes the interview, regardless of whether the visitor considers that his/her problem has been solved or not.

In addition to the office, there are four other important locales where the administrative process evolves: the guest house, the garage, the store and the IDA vehicles.

The guest house is inhabited during week days by the non-native front-line workers of Neguev, who at week-ends go to their home areas. Formerly it was the plantation house. Attached to the guest house there used to be also an eating room where meals were prepared for the officials. When the O34 Programme was ended in 1987, and Neguev became a Regional Office, the meal service was abolished, and other services in the guest house were curtailed. The argument for doing so was that the institution was providing transport to the neighbouring villages, and as officials received special allowances for being separated from their families they ought to pay a rent. This, in fact, became an important point of conflict between the chief and the guest house dwellers. The guest house, then, is not only a major focus of grievances, but also the locale where complaints against the institution - especially the regional administration - are put forward strongest, at least by the non-native officials.

The garage is the place where maintenance is given to the cars and simple repairs are carried out. It was formerly a barn and is situated some 20 meters outside the office. Socially this is a very important place. Officials gather in the garage to chat and gossip. The place has a strategic significance as cars are the scarcest administrative resource. Officials, therefore, spend a lot of time in the garage, out of self-interest (because their car is being repaired) or out of interest in mechanics (the ailments of every car are followed by the officials as the development of a child by parents). The mechanic is a very talkative and friendly older man who loves gossiping. The officials therefore know that they can comment on problems and gather information there without risking being heard by their superiors. It is important for the field officials to maintain a good relationship with the mechanic so that he will do a good job when the car breaks down. This can be accomplished by keeping him company and helping him and by letting him use the car once in a while (as one of his sons is a settler in Neguev).

The store has similar qualities to the garage although it is less visited by the front-line workers. It is managed by members of the local Association of Small Producers. It provides a location where settlers and officials can meet in an informal atmosphere. Furthermore, the store plays an important role in the extension delivery system as it supplies agricultural inputs and goods, such as working clothes.

The IDA vehicles are locales where officials spend a lot of time together each day. One car takes and fetches people to and from Siquirres and the other to Guácimo and Jiménez (direction Guápiles). It happens that the first car is occupied by officials loyal to Fernando Campos, the regional director, whereas the second by officials critical of him. As one official would comment, "if you go to Guácimo at the end of the day you can score by criticizing the chief. If you go to Siquirres you really have to be careful with your words".

It should be stressed that a good relationship with the secretaries, the mechanic and the drivers are important to the front-line workers. As an extensionist asserts, "if a settler passes and needs you they could tell him (the settler) that you are not in the

office while you are, or they could "forget" to pass you an important message. This could cause you a lot of trouble in your work".

Social interaction in two selected locales

Here I will provide two examples of the type of social interaction taking place in two locales which play a special role in the reproduction of the everyday, or 'informal' reality of the administrative process: the garage and the room of the legal and administrative assistants.

The garage

It has already been pointed out that the mechanic plays an important role in the gossip circuit. In the course of the research I realized that important discussions were held in the garage, which provided crucial information for understanding the administrative process. Thus, I learnt of significant events that were discussed and interpreted here, and noticed that veiled, and sometimes quite open criticisms on the regional direction, often in the form of jokes, would be common. For example I heard here the nicknames that were given to some superiors.

In order to give an impression of the type of conversations that take place in this locale I will present an account of such a meeting in the garage when a couple of extensionists were present.

In discussing a particular 'coordination' problem the mechanic suddenly starts criticizing the Head of the Settlement for not lending him a car for a union meeting. (It is however known that he has been rebuked for using one of the cars to visit his son who has a farm in the settlement). He complains that this is unjust especially as the Head of the Settlement openly uses the institution's car for his own personal advantage and has often been spotted taking his family out on Sunday trips. A few of the officials nod. Then the mechanic continues talking about the lack of recognition they receive from their superiors for the sacrifices they endure in such a difficult place, and starts comparing Jesús Chávez (Head of the Credit Fund) with the present IDA Manager (Roberto Arcos), arguing that the former at least is a humble character, someone ready to give anyone a hand and listen to their complaints. Moreover, he argues that Jesús Chávez is in favour of the working classes. Instead, individuals like Fernando Campos are only trying to place working people at a disadvantage. The driver then comments that he totally agrees with the mechanic and complains that while his allowances have been curtailed due to the closure of the 034 Programme⁶ those of the superiors have not.

Then the administrative assistant contributes with a short example of bad treatment by the Settlement Head. He says, "yesterday I had to go to Guácimo, and we agreed the car was going to pick me up at nine o'clock (instead of 7.30 a.m.) in order to go straight to the municipality, I did not bother to dress early. So when Fernando Campos saw me in Siquirres (the village were both lived), he asked me, "what are you doing in shorts at 8.30 in the morning and why are you not working for you don't look ill, and he reprimanded me. I had to explain everything to him like a small child and feel guilty for going out to buy a newspaper".

Subsequently the mechanic intervenes again and asks, "Why. Is the boss paying us with his own money? No, the money is the IDA's". The driver speaks up again

⁶The 034 programme was closed in 1987, which meant that the budget of the Neguev regional office had to be cut.

arguing that life in the institution is not bad as long as they pay the allowances. Without these and without other 'extras' he would have to resign. The mechanic agrees and argues that it is all the bosses' fault, that instead of taking care of their problems and the farmers' they bother about insignificant issues like reducing the small benefits the officials have.

It should, however, be remarked that only these three persons talk while another three listen without commenting.

Gatherings at the garage can also be funny. For example, one morning I arrived at the office, and as the *técnico* I had agreed to go with to the field was not in I walked to the garage to look for him. All the officials were there, apparently having a lot of fun. Mario Green, the social worker was telling a story. He gestured a lot and constantly looked in the direction of the office to see whether the head might be coming. The story was about a chinese restaurant owner in Siquirres who some time ago bought a plot without title in a nearby settlement, Tierragrande. He was worried that the plot would be taken away from him as he did not qualify as a landless peasant. Mario Green and Pablo, a former credit supervisor, used to eat at his restaurant. When the restaurant owner heard that they worked for the IDA he offered them, as he asked them for legal advice regarding his plot chop suey and beer for free. Enthusiastic from the beer they promised to help him to obtain his ownership title. Since then, they were always welcome at the restaurant and received plenty of food and beer. However, when the Regional Office started to legalize the land situation in Tierragrande and Hugo Paz, the Interim Head, learnt that a wealthy Chinese owned a plot, the decision was made to revoke it and notice was sent to the Chinese. The next time they went to eat at his restaurant the Chinese was very angry as he complained in broken Spanish, *hay hombre pequeño y calvo que dice que estoy salado, vamos a ver quien esta salado, yo o el, bacalao*, (There is a small, bald man who says that I have bad luck, but we'll see who has bad luck, he or me, poor guy), and he threw them out after telling them that he would see to it that they were sacked for making false promises. The Chinese argued that he had powerful political connections since he had made important contributions to the *Liberación* party. This anecdote was celebrated by the officials as they laughed loudly.

Apparently this anecdote triggered off a stream of other anecdotes and comments which were quite critical of the institution. One official laughed at the attempt by the Regional Office to confiscate 4 plots with macadamia trees owned by an American in another nearby settlement. "They have not even been able to evict Cacharpon nor Patas Verdes (both settlers supported by UPAGRA), how are they going to throw away this *gringo* with all his dollars?" Then another official recalls that Cacharpon (who lives next to the guesthouse) was once evicted, but the same day he was brought back to the plot. The mechanic then asks Moisés, the *agrarista* (the legal assistant), about his opinion, as he is in charge of legal issues. By way of answer Moisés tells an anecdote from El Indio, the settlement where he worked before. Once he had to evict a settler who claimed that he would not leave the plot unless dead. So, he told him that if necessary it would happen that way, since he was there to guarantee that the law was enacted. It cost him a lot of effort to coordinate with the local police for the eviction. A few days later he arrived there with a few policemen. The sergeant, however, when he sensed problems, started studying the eviction order in detail and concluded that he could not carry out the order because it was too old. Consequently, he had to leave humiliated with his tail between his legs (*con la cola entre las piernas*). More of these stories followed, creating an impression that the law was everything but applicable.

These discussions were interrupted when settlers came nearby. However, there are a few who have access to these conversations. That means that when they approach the group no attempt is made to change the subject. It does not mean, however, that these settlers are accepted in the intimate group of the officials. They are tolerated to some degree, but no attempts are made to involve them in a conversation.

Other personal subjects and experiences that were discussed in this locale were women and family issues, such as the case of settlers or colleagues having more than one woman. Issues regarding service delivery and general settler's problems are seldom discussed. Sometimes reference is made to failed agricultural development programmes but only to the effect of proving how unjust the promotion policy is. One example of such a remark is, "there is no consistency in the decisions made by the Executive Board of the IDA. Thus Z, after the failure of his agricultural programme, was promoted to Head of the Settlement in Y. You see, in the institution promotion chances are not dependent on performance but on your relationship with your superiors".

The legal and administrative assistants' room

Another locale where conversations relating to administrative life were common is the administrative and legal assistants' room. Here the same type of issues are discussed, often in a more detailed way and from a different point of view. Since both the legal assistant (the *agrарista*) and the administrative assistant are from the Atlantic zone this room is predominantly visited by the other officials native to the zone. Here they would complain about the 'fact' that it is outsiders (not from the Atlantic zone) who earn the best salaries and have the best career opportunities; about the 'fact' that many officials from San José come to the settlement to do jobs they can do themselves, while earning extra-allowances for doing so; and about the 'fact' that the real hard jobs are given in the weekend to the native officials because the others go back to their villages in Turrialba or Guanacaste. Here Mario Green, the social worker, would report on the suit he had filed against the institution to get back his regional allowance.

Also, discussions that were held in the garage, were reinterpreted in this locale in a more 'realistic' way. For example with regard to criticisms that were once addressed against the Interim Head in the garage because he did not assign the car to (M) to go to the field the week before, (T) would comment; "The truth is that (M) has been seen too often in Guácimo (where he lives) with the car while he should have been somewhere else, so how can you be sure that he needed the car with so much urgency". Or, with regard to remarks that were made in the garage that a former legal assistant was using his function to earn "extra-income" the following comment was made, "well, if a settler is ready to give you some 2 or 3 thousand colones in return for speeding up the selection process why should you not accept. The only thing is that you should not take the money here in the office, where Fernando Campos or Hugo Paz could come in suddenly. Using the office for such business also soils our reputation".

Analysis

Yet, what does a focus on interaction within the different social locales which constitute the administrative domain tell us about the administrative process? To begin with we see that in these locales a strict separation - both physical and social - is brought about between settlers and bureaucrats. This social distance between front-line workers and settlers was not self-evident since the social background of most front-line workers did not differ much from that of Neguev settlers. It was the result of a particular bureaucratic attitude which, as we will see, prevailed in the administrative domain but not in the field domain. Thus, talk between front-line workers in the

administrative domain revolves around 'trivial' and everyday topics, and when reference is made to problems in dealing with settlers this is done in an anecdotal way. In this way, the administrative domain is clearly insulated from the problematic reality of the field.

It was also shown that the topics discussed vary according to the locales; thus gossiping is rather common in the garage and in the guest house, but not in the extensionists' room. Even when the same topics are discussed the tone varies according to the locale; in the legal and administrative assistants' room talk about 'corruption' appears to be more moralistic than in the garage. The sense of front-line workers' commitment also varies according to the locale, and as we saw in the case of the garage the views on the capacity of the IDA to achieve its goals, can become rather cynical.

Finally, it must be noted that these locales display 'emergent properties'. The character of social interaction within them is not derivative from their physical characteristics but is the result of a particular use of space by the front-line workers. Locales provide a variety of arena's in which current issues and problems are interpreted and re-interpreted. In this way a particular understanding of the role of the front-line worker in state intervention is achieved, as someone with little power to enact the rules, subjected to unjust working conditions, whose commitment is not valued; but also as an individual who ought to hold to specific principles in order not to soil the reputation of his colleagues and the office - at least within the confines of the regional office.⁷

3.3 The Fragmented and Contingent Nature of the Administrative Process

In the previous section a somewhat static view was presented of the various patterns of interaction between officials. In this section I attempt to convey a flavour of the conflictive and problematic character of the administrative process. But first a note on methodology.

It must be pointed out that most of the ethnographic material used in this chapter originates from casual comments and informal conversations I had with officials. As was suggested in the first chapter, entry to administrative life in Neguev was not easy. When I made clear to the Head of the Settlement that I was interested in the organizational aspects of service delivery he stressed the necessity to develop a beneficiary's selection system. In effect, he wanted me to construct a number of profiles in order to identify those applicants who had most potential to become successful, entrepreneurial, settlers.

I must recall that my status in the office was rather insecure and that the ambiance I encountered was not conducive to making open interviews. I then focussed on evaluative remarks and comments concerning ongoing problems and issues. In this way the contradictions and rivalries surrounding administrative life became apparent. I

⁷This, I think has been neglected in most of the literature on local bureaucracy which generally focuses on the formal setting of the desk office, while paying little attention to the role of other 'places' in shaping the administrative process. See for an interesting study on local bureaucracy which focusses only on the formal setting of the desk office, Raby 1978).

must say that the view that resulted was quite revealing, as it appeared that the administrative process was much less structured than I expected. In fact, I learnt that administrative life consisted of rather trivial issues and situations, and that formal rules were only referred to in the cases where the administrator had to enforce his authority.

Organisational problems and interpersonal relations

The issue of borrowing motorbikes is illustrative of an organizational problem which led to recurrent interpersonal problems. One eternal problem for Neguev officials was the lack of transport, until three motor bikes were procured. They were assigned to the social worker (Mario Green), the forestry extensionist (James Gordon) and to the *pejibaye* palm⁸ extensionist (Ernesto Gamba). The others travelled in cars with drivers either because they were Heads of agricultural development programmes or because they had no driving licence. Motor bikes were subject to different rules than cars as they were assigned personally. This meant that the officials could take them to their house and that there was less control as to their use. There were no clear rules concerning their use over the weekends or in the evenings.

It was no surprise that these motor bikes became a very valuable resource, both for work and for activities of a more personal character. Thus, small irritations would arise between officials concerning their use. Borrowing arrangements were common and they were made without the knowledge of their superiors (Hugo Paz and Fernando Campos). A case in point was the social worker who would often complain that colleagues borrowed his motor bike and did not comply with the time conditions he set, the motor bike would often be returned with some small damage. However, it struck me that he always lent it again when requested by his colleagues. I supposed that he wanted to secure their solidarity this way.

Another field of dissatisfaction concerned what was perceived as 'the arbitrary character of policy'. Some activities were regarded as useless by the front-line workers. For example, at a given moment the officials were instructed to carry out a questionnaire on three different settlements, two of which were not easily accessible. The objective was to gather data on settler families in order to design a housing-programme. The task, however, was far from easy. Settlers were not easy to find for various reasons. Some spent a large proportion of the year picking coffee in other areas, as their farms only produced for home consumption. In fact, many settlers in these remote settlements see their property as an investment and survive by combining activities on the farm and in other locations. Besides, title on the land had in most cases not been legally secured according to the IDA law. The questionnaire, thus, became a rather wearisome exercise, as it could take hours to reach a farm, only to find the owner not at home, and if he was, they were received with suspicion. The social worker would be usually in charge of coordinating these activities, but Mario Green could see no point to it. He argued that the questionnaire was far too complex and lengthy and was not suited to the local circumstances of settlers. Moreover, he saw this as a typical example of unnecessary expenditure and lack of confidence in front-level workers' ability to find suitable ways to produce information.

As argued, there was also a general discontent among the field workers concerning the organization of their work. Work activities were little structured and much freedom was allowed to them to fill in tasks as they liked. This resulted in a

⁸The *pejibaye* palm is commercially interesting for its palm heart.

situation characterized by few work incentives and no reward system. As Gabriel Rodriguez, the maize extensionist argued,

"at Neguev there is no stimulus. If you get promoted it is because of your political connections, not because of your capabilities. Successes at the technical level are always claimed by the chief. For example, when presentations have to be made about the goals achieved by the Regional Office it is always the chief who does it. There is anyway no acknowledgement of your role".

Ethnic contradictions surfaced now and then in the administrative domain. However, some had stronger feeling in this respect than others. One official who openly complained to me of racism was James Gordon, a black extensionist in charge of the reforestation programme and cocoa assistant. On a trip to the Tierragrande settlement James Gordon, Mario Green, who is also black, and I had an unusually open conversation over the matter. It all began when James Gordon started inquiring about race relations in Holland. Reflecting on Costa Rica he observed,

"white Costa Ricans are very racist. If one black does anything wrong all blacks are blamed. You must be careful that they do not humiliate you (*que no se lo monten*). For that reason I don't allow them to make jokes about me in my presence. Maybe you have noticed that I am always provoking people. I am like that....The white officials in Neguev are also racists. To begin with they are not from the Atlantic zone and do not really understand what is going on here... If you want to test what I tell you you should travel with them in a car when there is no black in it, and remark that James is a vicious negro. I tell you, they will start talking ill about negroes in general. In recent times there are many stories about small girls who are raped. By luck no black has been jailed for such an act, otherwise we would all be lynched".

However, not all the black officials had such strong feelings about the subject. The legal assistant (*agrarista*), Moisés, would not acknowledge it. The social worker would claim that racism was in part the result of ignorance and that at any rate he did not feel intimidated by it.

Institutional struggles and the administrative process

It took some time before I was able to gather any indications that several political struggles had played an important role in what I perceived as low motivation and lack of commitment of the officials, as some of them started referring to these when explaining the evolution of the agricultural development programmes. These political struggles greatly influenced the development of certain administrative practices at the Regional Office.

Soon I learnt that Fernando Campos, the Settlement Head and recently Regional Director, got that position thanks to the current General Manager of the IDA and ex-034 Programme Manager, Don Roberto Arcos (see Chapter 2). Fernando Campos was considered by many, especially the non-native officials as an authoritarian character. This showed in his overall management style and attitudes towards them and the farmers. Illustrative in this respect are the comments by the extensionist Gabriel Rodriguez. When I asked him to describe Campos' style he answered that he was very inflexible, always convinced of being in the right and unwilling to begin a dialogue with people holding different views. Interestingly, he added that this was not an

idiosyncratic feature of his chief but that it was a characteristic of a new group of administrators led by Don Roberto Arcos. He also commented that there was an opposing group, more flexible and intelligent and with a more participative style which was headed by Jesús Chávez, the Head of the Credit Fund. According to him, some of the officials in the office felt close to this group. For that reason some of them had been transferred against their will in the past. These were often the best officials. One of them was Pablo, a former Credit Supervisor, who was particularly committed to his work and to the settlers, and who during his stay had established an excellent relationship with most farmers. The reason for his departure, he argued, was both personal and political. Personal because Fernando Campos could not tolerate someone who was so popular, especially a Credit Supervisor in charge of taking decisions as to credit delivery and return payment. As Gabriel Rodríguez put it, "Fernando surely thought that Pablo was digging his grave".

This clash was also related to institutional politics since it was the reflection of a wider and longlasting conflict at the level of the entire institution. It concerned a conflict between Jesús Chávez, and the IDA manager Roberto Arcos and Fernando Campos, Regional Director for the Atlantic zone (see Chapter 1). The upshot was that the regional office was clearly divided into two factions. The *agrarista* (Moisés Knight) and the native extensionists supported Fernando Campos, whereas the Credit Officials and most non-native extensionists operated in a tenuous *modus vivendi* with him. It must be mentioned that the conflict between Fernando Campos and the transferred supervisor, Pablo, occurred while the funding organization, USAID, was exerting a lot of pressure to disburse the credit funds.

It is pertinent to look in more detail at this conflict at the Regional Office because it clearly shows that the administrative process is embedded in wider institutional struggles. When I had heard about the past conflict with Pablo, the former Credit Supervisor, I sought for any signals of political commitment on his part, especially because UPAGRA leaders would tell me that they used to have good conversations with him and that he showed much interest in their views. They supposed that his transfer was due to fear by Fernando Campos that he was becoming too progressive. Surprisingly, I did not find much evidence of political commitment on the part of Pablo, quite to the contrary. Mario Green, the social worker, who himself was very active in politics and had much knowledge of local and party politics described Pablo as a-political, and explained the conflict in terms of institutional struggles. Later I learnt that this particular struggle concerned the implementation of the credit delivery approach propounded by the 034 IRDP Programme.

Almost at the end of the research I had a meeting with Pablo, who had recently been promoted to Head of the Unit of Analysis and Supervision of the Credit Fund in San José. Not surprisingly, Pablo evaded all references to past conflicts in Neguev, between the Regional Office and the Credit Fund. At the same time he had a distinctive explanation for the problems of extension and credit delivery in the 034 Programme, in terms of the failure to apply a particular model of credit delivery.

According to this model credit should function as an instrument in the hands of the *técnico* in his efforts to introduce modern technology, the latter being the real objective of the Credit Fund. This approach was being promoted at the time by the BID (the Interamerican Development Bank) after it had been successfully applied in the USA. It entailed that credit be extended for development purposes and not on a commercial basis. In this view, the *técnico* in his role of change agent was the person responsible for inducing within the settler a shift from a traditional mentality towards a modern one. Pablo agreed with this approach and emphasized that a necessary condition for this was that the *técnico* should have at his/her disposition a technological

package to offer to the producer. This, in his view, was precisely what was lacking in the O34 Programme. Originally an attempt had been made to apply a farming systems approach entailing the design of individual farm development plans, but due to different policy priorities on the part of the Regional Office the original approach was not implemented and the plan of developing differentiated technological packages was forgotten.

Analysis

The picture that emerges of social interaction between front-line workers then, is one that is characterized by little solidarity and unity, as the group seems to be torn apart by various contradictions, according to administrative function, commitment to some institutional faction, ethnic or residential background, etc.

So far we see that front-line workers are engaged in a lot of gossiping and speculation, that they feel that their efforts are not appreciated enough by their superiors, that they are to some extent divided along ethnic and task-lines, that they quarrel about the use of cars, etc. Yet, we see also that they complain of not being given the possibility to concentrate on the really important issues in the settlement. They find many of their tasks redundant, and some of them have distinct views about how the settlement should be administered. In short, administrative life appeared to consist of a multiplicity of everyday, apparently trivial problems and issues.

Yet this provided the context in which a large number of important decisions were made as to who receives credit and who not, about how problems over land-adjudication would be dealt with, etc. The way such decisions were made appeared to be quite arbitrary to me as no clear criteria existed, for example, for allocating credit. Furthermore, it appeared that one central component of the IRDP approach, the design of individual farm development plans together with the design of an appropriate technological package was not carried out.

3.4 The Model of the 'Client' as an Element in the Ideology of Intervention⁹

It struck me when talking with the front-line workers, that reference was always made to a particular, very negative, set of views of the farmer: as an individual who was not commercially-minded, not entrepreneurial, not capable of running a farm. Indeed, in spite of their divergences and dissatisfactions, and of the feelings that their work was not much valued, they all shared this way of talking of the beneficiary when dealing with everyday service delivery issues, in what was basically a form of labelling. It has already been argued that the social background of front-line workers did not differ substantially from that of settlers. I now argue that the the above-mentioned negative conception of the beneficiary was a central element in what I designated an intervention ideology, which reflected in labelling practices. Next, I contend that labelling was not a local invention, but that it was a local adaptation of the USAID

⁹The term 'model of the client', has been coined by myself. The idea can be traced to an analogy Don Roberto Arcos once made when arguing that IDA officials should treat settlers in a similar way as the personnel of a clinic treat patients; that is as someone who has to be treated and cured. Thus in Don Roberto's view IDA officials should treat settlers as clients who have to be provided with all necessary means to become an entrepreneurial farmer.

planners' model of the 'client' by front-line workers and administrators. To that end I describe how the model of the 'client' was fabricated by USAID planners as a result of their problematization of prevailing institution-client relations in the IDA, and how it was appropriated by bureaucrats at the regional and local levels.

The genealogy of the model of the 'client'

As argued, one major objective of the O34 Programme was that of strengthening the operational capacity of the IDA. In the view of USAID planners this could only happen if the 'institutional culture' in Costa Rica was changed. Thus, John Smith, the USAID advisor to the O34 Programme, argued that political clientelism was a fundamental problem in Costa Rica as it generated patterns of transactions between politicians, who used state institutions in order to obtain electoral support, and groups of beneficiaries. As John Smith argued, the political use of institutional resources thwarted their effective utilization for development purposes. This emphasis on institutional efficiency and administrative reform, it must be noted, did not mean that USAID planners did not realize that some mode of social control in rural areas, directed against organisations such as UPAGRA, was required.

In a context of increasing land scarcity and budgetary constraints the agrarian problematic came to be perceived, under the influence of USAID, more and more as a problem of effective institutional intervention, in which administrative reform and decentralization were viewed as central to a 'modern' approach to land reform. This entailed that the solution to the problem of landlessness and rural unrest was conceived by USAID in terms of the 'depoliticization' of institutional developmental activities, rather than in terms of the need to accommodate oppositional political groupings within the mainstream political system.

The problem then was conceptualized by USAID planners as follows; how to establish a type of institution-client relationship which would eschew the customary patterns of political clientelism while maintaining a certain capacity to exert social control on particular populations, such as politically motivated squatters. The answer was that of instituting a mode of institution-client relations in which the beneficiary was viewed as an individual with certain rights, but also with distinctive obligations towards the state. In contrast with the practice of political clientelism these rights and obligations did not entail a political transaction, but a commitment to a particular pattern of smallholder 'development'. Thus central to this model of the 'client' was the endowing of the relationship between the institution and the beneficiary with a distinctive institutional, as against a political, significance. The client was treated as an individual who had the right to state services and goods in return for his commitment to, and active participation, in his transformation into an entrepreneurial farmer.

The essence of the model of the 'client' was that s/he established a relationship with the IDA as an individual, not as a member of a larger group. This for the IDA was a very different policy from the previous one of engaging in negotiations with organised pressure groups. Hence, by allocating resources such as credit to individuals only, and refusing to engage in negotiations with groups, the power of organisations such as UPAGRA was undermined.

As for the 034 IRD Programme the individualization of the relationship between the IDA and clients was reflected in the following sets of activities.

1. A beneficiary selection system geared to choosing potentially entrepreneurial farmers.
2. A system of guided extension by which the beneficiary received credit on an individual basis.
3. A focus on individual farm development plans.

As we will see in this chapter and Chapter 6, through these individualization practices all kinds of negotiations with UPAGRA could be avoided.

Next, I discuss how this model of the 'client' was legitimized by a distinctive reading of Costa Rican agrarian history. Such a historical interpretation can be found in the programme documents of the 034 Programme.

The 'rural democratic model' of Costa Rican agrarian history

Gudmundson (1984, 1989) has coined the concept of 'the rural democratic model' of Costa Rica in order to describe a particular representation of Costa Rican history as a country which until the advent of capitalism lacked widespread agrarian conflict due to a homogenous peasantry and the absence of typical Latin American latifundia. In brief, through this model a representation of Costa Rican agrarian structure is produced as being composed of ethnically homogenic, 'white' peasants with essentially democratic traditions in what was until the advent of the coffee economy an egalitarian society. This is in contradistinction with other Latin American countries where, according to this representation, an inegalitarian agrarian structure existed bolstered by highly authoritarian types of state-peasant relations.

Gudmundson, in scrutinizing this thesis, extensively shows that there is no evidence for supporting this 'rural democratic model' of Costa Rican history. Instead, he draws a much more complex picture of Costa Rican agrarian history, characterized by a longlasting struggle for land in which a peasantry and rural elites were involved. Peasant political activity in present times, then, rather than the result of disruption caused by agricultural modernization can better be viewed in terms of wider historical processes of rural struggle which resulted in a complex pattern of class relationships. The 'issue of landlessness', then is a far more complex one than that of giving land through institutional means to the landless, in order to ensure their commitment to democracy. Instead, it involves intervening in an extended history of rural struggle. In short, land reform is a political problem in which the state, a peasantry and a variety of large landholders - fruit multinationals, cattle ranchers - are involved.

Interestingly, the 'rural democratic model' of Costa Rican history prevails in the work of Seligson, who is regularly quoted in the 034 Programme documents as an expert on Costa Rican land reform, and we see that in the 034 programme documents this view is readily taken over. Thus Seligson (1980) is extensively quoted in the 034 Programme project paper called 'Agrarian settlement and productivity' as "showing that until the early 1800's and the rise of coffee as the country's chief cash crop, Costa Rica was a country of independent, self-sufficient, yeoman farmers with little class stratification".

This 'rural democratic model' leads to the following, more or less explicit, understanding of land reform in institutional terms. Peasants in Costa Rica (in contrast to other Latin American countries) are, by nature, democratic, peaceful and law-abiding, as long as they have access to land. However, due to the expansion of capitalism in the nineteenth century persistent landlessness has become a common

feature of the Costa Rican agrarian structure, to the extent that it has become a danger to democracy in Costa Rica. In order to preserve the democratic character of Costa Rica, land reform has to be undertaken. Yet, land reform should target the 'real peasants' of Costa Rica, not those speculators who are ready to sell out after having squatted land, in the process becoming the instruments of politically subversive forces. Furthermore, land reform should not become a political instrument in the hands of ambitious politicians. This would only endanger the future of 'democracy'. To that end an effective land reform institute is necessary and a good beneficiary selection system is a critical element for its success.

In this way land reform as a particular type of state intervention in specific arenas of rural struggle is to be depoliticized.

The model of the 'client' in O34 Programme documents

It is not surprising, then, that the agrarian problem in Costa Rica is conceptualized in the O34 Programme documents in terms of the effectivity of particular types of institution client relations. Thus it is argued that in the past IDA-client relations were permeated by 'paternalist and clientelist practices'. In effect, in the project document of the O34 Programme we see that the farmer is referred to as a 'client', which prior to the O34 Programme was not the case. We see also that the term 'client' appears in different forms, as when a classification of the clientele is made, or a description of the 'total client pool' is given, or as when reference is made to particular types of institutional-client relationships. Paternalism, is mentioned as a danger which has to be combatted through the 'rational choice of a clientele' (see project paper "Agrarian Settlement and Productivity"¹⁰).

This focus on institution-client relations is also apparent in the explanations which are put forward for the 'failure' of IDA's colonization policy in the sixties, and particularly in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica. Thus we read in the above-mentioned project paper the following statement in which reference is made to the Bataan colony,

"It is important to remember that, whatever the deficiencies that persist on the older colonies, they derived from a misconception in ITCO at the time of their establishment which the present project is explicitly attempting to avoid, that is, the belief that colonization in remote areas without reasonable access and minimal infrastructure is feasible and cheap. It is neither and, still worse, led ITCO to an economically and institutionally impossible paternalism that is as burdensome and unappealing to the institution as it is frustrating and anti-developmental for its clients" (Annex II.D. p. 20).

However, in my opinion, this view is not only simplistic but it also leads to a self-serving explanation of the supposed failure of earlier attempts to bring about colonisation in the Atlantic zone. Bataan was formerly a plantation where squatting by ex-plantation workers took place after the UFCO retreated from the Atlantic zone. It was converted into a 'colony' by ITCO in order to maintain social control in the area, and possibly to experiment with new modes of social control, by encouraging individuals from other areas in the country to settle in the Atlantic zone. It could be argued, then, that if 'paternalism' existed, it was not because of a 'misconception' concerning the most efficacious way of effecting colonization, but is an element of a

¹⁰This 'project paper' was published in 1980 as an unclassified document. It provides a description and appraisal of the project as well as detailed project analyses.

very conflictive history of relations between the state, plantation labourers and peasants.

In summarizing, the model of the 'client', as I define it, is a particular way of conceiving of the farmer, as someone who has to be serviced and provided with the necessary conditions for becoming an 'entrepreneurial' or commercially-oriented farmer. In this view the farmer should be treated as an individual with distinctive rights and obligations. This model, or conception of the farmer, is the contrary of what is commonly designated in the literature on patron-client relationships, relationships through which 'clients' become the followers of political entrepreneurs in return for security and resources. The model of the 'client', as conceived by USAID planners was, in fact, geared to combatting exactly such relationships. It was a response to what was perceived as the over-politicized functioning of the IDA in which a pattern of 'paternalistic' relations had developed between front-line workers and settlers in order to combat the leftist peasant organizations. In short, the model of the 'client' implies the introduction of techniques of individualization in a highly politicized situation. Together with this new conception of the settler, huge amounts of credit became available in the O34 Programme to be distributed among the farmers.

In the remainder of the chapter I argue that this model of the 'client' worked out in a rather special way in the process of implementation. By front-line workers and administrators the model was endowed with a different, 'local' meaning, with the result that it became an element within a local ideology of intervention. The model of the 'undeserving client', in effect, was employed by the Settlement Head (Fernando Campos) in order to force settlers to comply with the IDA policy. For the front-line workers the model of the 'undeserving client' became a tool for explaining the contradictions of state intervention as well as a 'labelling device'. The transformed model of the '(undeserving) client', then, became at the local level an instrument of social control.

The model of the 'client' transformed in the field

In this section I will present a short account of a meeting between four settlers, two IDA front-line workers (Mario Green, the social worker and the *pejibaye* extensionist Gamba) and three officials of the IMAS, the Institute of Social Welfare. It took place in the extensionists' room within the regional office. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce a new agricultural programme which would be financed by the IMAS and monitored by IDA extensionists. The account is interesting as it shows how the ideology of intervention operates within the administrative domain. Although the principal officials in this account do not belong to the IDA there are strong similarities in the way in which officials from both institutes approach settlers. This is manifested in their emphasis on training and education directed to individuals, and the expectation that their attention should be reciprocated by compliance to a particular conception of institution-client relations. It should be mentioned that the settlers present at the meeting were selected by the IDA front-line workers, and that they, therefore, were considered cooperative 'clients'.

The meeting starts at three o'clock. After having been introduced by the Neguev social worker one of the IMAS officials begins to explain the reason for their presence. They want to set up a pineapple project. However, as he argues, they, as officials of the IMAS, are more interested in the social and family aspects of development projects than in the technical ones. Thus, it has been decided that the Neguev extension service

will take charge of the technical supervision and that they will provide training on financial management, the establishment of a division of labour in the household and the use of profits. One problem, however, is that of the 9 settlers who applied for the project five were not present. Three sent a note mentioning that they could not be present and two just did not show up. The leading IMAS functionary becomes angry and starts complaining about the lack of responsibility and discipline on the part of the settlers, of their reluctance to cooperate with institutional efforts to abolish poverty. The IDA social worker intervenes and indicates that only two did not send a message and that they might have been incapable to do so because the distance from their farms to the regional office is very large. Furthermore, the roads are bad as it has been raining much lately and it is harvest time. Yet, the IMAS social worker is not convinced and stresses again the necessity to enhance settlers sense of responsibility as the only way to overcome poverty. He relates about their problems in reaching poor communities.

The settlers do not react, neither do they seem to be very impressed. Next, another IMAS official, a female social worker, starts to explain the conditions that have to be fulfilled in order to become a beneficiary. It strikes me that when questions are asked the leading IMAS official answers. Some confusion arises about the conditions of repayment. The social workers seem to elude the question. The settlers, who by now have become more concerned, demand a clear answer. Finally the principal IMAS official comments that they are not especially interested in the devolution of the credit. "Then it is no credit, but a gift", clarifies a settler. The leading IMAS-official answers irritated,

"look, we are not a bank, so we are not interested in financial efficiency. What we aim is to create the conditions for you to become self-sufficient agricultural producers. Thus, our criteriae for evaluating the project is not whether you pay it back or not, but whether the income that is generated by this new activity is recycled into productive activities, and whether profits are used in ways that are advantageous to the entire family. Our role as social workers will be to instruct you in the use of the credit. This project, thus, has predominantly a training function. In addition, we will make efforts to provide some information on marketing opportunities".

The settlers then take the initiative and start asking questions about the amount of money that is being offered. They are interested to know whether it is below or above the amount that according the bank is necessary for an hectare of pineapple. The IMAS officials assert that the only thing they know for sure is that the crop area will not be larger than half an hectare. They think that a substantial contribution will be expected from the settlers in terms of labour, but that is something that they have to discuss with the Regional Director of the IDA, Fernando Campos. This clarification, however, is not enough for the settlers. In the beginning it was only one who took a critical attitude but now it is the four of them. The oldest one wants to know exactly whether it is a gift or not, and what the market perspectives are. Moreover, he doubts whether the project will be profitable. He argues,

"probably you do not realize that it cost me a lot of valuable time to come here, time that I could have used productively. We really appreciate that you want to help us with this project, but for us it is important to talk specifics. We want to know how we are going to profit from this project".

Mario Green, intervenes at this juncture and argues that this was a preparatory meeting, that the project still has to be designed. The extensionist agrees with him entirely. This is the first time that he gives his opinion. As it is almost five o'clock a decision is made to meet again to discuss the details.

The IMAS leading social worker then commends the settlers to convince the other chosen beneficiaries to attend the next meeting. For,

"you must understand that these projects do not only aim at helping individuals but also should have a community effect. That means that it should unite you, foster solidarity. So, please take care that the others are present".

And in presenting another argument,

"you should also realize that we have a lot of work to do. Presently we are working with a lot of groups, from Sarapiquí (to the north of the atlantic zone neighbouring with Panama) to the frontier with Panama, some of them with a high level of consciousness about their problems, and others, such as the indians in the Talamanca, (an area in the south of the Atlantic zone), with very special needs. Our time is scarce, so it is necessary that beneficiaries organize themselves in order to increase the efficiency of our activities".

And he proceeds to talk about the large demand that exists for IMAS projects. Then he stresses the value of being responsible, with respect to the family, the community, the institutions. He finishes with the following statement, "thanks to your responsibility you will be able to help yourself and by helping yourself you will help us".

At last everyone left after shaking hands. I followed the entire meeting from a distance while pretending to work with the files. I was rather surprised with respect to the way the meeting had evolved. I could not imagine that these settlers who, supposedly, were just able to survive under marginal circumstances could be so critical with regard to a potential gift. Although they had been selected by the extensionist and the social worker their attitude towards the officials was not really one of great respect and gratitude. On the contrary, they looked rather suspicious and calculating. In some respect it conformed to Fernando Campos' description of the settlers as manipulatory. But how did their concern with economic profitability fit in the image he depicted of them as traditional and with no sense for entrepreneurship?

The model of the client and credit delivery

In providing evidence of the absence of a 'farmers' entrepreneurial mentality, one extensionist referred to a questionnaire that was conducted under a selected sample of settlers on credit utilization. One of the questions was, "what is the difference between the good and bad use of credit?" It appeared that all of them replied that as long as credit was not spent on liquor and women the use was good. He pointed out that no reference was made in their reply to the need to use the credit rationally and of not using it for purposes other than those for which it had been extended (such as consumption or other production activities). Similarly, he argued that the settlers had no notion of the criminal nature of credit deflection. The argument then was that since peasants acted 'irrationally' they had to be further educated. Yet, he found it depressing that after so many years of attempting to teach the settlers to use credit in a rational way they had achieved so little.

However, a better explanation in accounting for the outcome of this questionnaire would be that credit was distributed on such a large scale and with so little supervision

in previous years that settlers had no time to develop much 'discipline' in the use of credit. Interestingly, when I confronted the Credit Supervisor with this explanation he would agree. As he put it, the need to accelerate the distribution of credit, due to pressure from USAID, might have been one important factor in explaining why settlers had not learned to handle credit.

The ten commandments of the 'real entrepreneurial farmer'

The model of the client reflected on the ways in which front-line differentiated between good and bad farmers. One standard measure in such a practice was the model of the independent and entrepreneurial yeoman of the central plateau. Deviations from this model were seen as pathological and originating in a deleterious way of life. Thus it was common to explain the problems of O34 Programme in the settlement by arguing that alcoholism and lack of commitment and discipline among settlers were a major problem. On the basis of extensive conversations with front-line workers about how an entrepreneurial farmer should be, I was able to discern the following rules that such a farmer should observe¹¹:

- 1) He should live on the farm, and not engage in off farm work outside Neguev
- 2) He should not grow traditional crops such as maize
- 3) He should show the devotion and commitment of a 'real farmer'
- 4) He should show respect to IDA officials
- 5) He should follow the advise of the extensionists
- 6) He should be imaginative and be able to improvise
- 7) He should not be an ex-plantation worker
- 8) He should not drink
- 9) He should not participate in activities organised by leftist groups
- 10) He should not be an evangelical (evangelicals spend too much time in the church)

In fact, these ten rules, or commandments, which the settler should follow in order to conform to the front-line workers' views of what a 'real' entrepreneurial farmer was, composed a powerful labelling device.

Given the failure of the agricultural development programmes in Neguev, and the fact that no more than 10% of the farmers were able to derive a sufficient income from the farm without having to engage in off-farm work in some banana plantation or other farm, it was quite impossible for farmers to conform to this model. Moreover, the only three settler families in Neguev who according to the front-line workers did conform to this model, and who could thus be considered real entrepreneurial farmers, had never received IDA credit nor extension¹². On the other hand, those settlers who were viewed as the best ones in Neguev did not conform to this model either; of the three, one was an ex-plantation worker, one was an occasional alcoholic, and another a Jehovah's Witness.

¹¹A female in the front-line workers' view was not capable to run a farm. Women who did not have grown-up sons who could take care of the farm had difficulties in obtaining title to the land (see Chapter 4 for a case of a divorced female beneficiary who fights for her rights).

¹²I do not want to go into the analysis of why the programme ended a failure. It suffices to mention that to a large extent the soils in Neguev are not suited for agriculture. In addition major errors were made concerning extension and technology transfer.

Ironically, the integrated rural development programme, instead of creating wealthy smallholders, had created a pool of poor, indebted and dependent clientele. Settlers, then, were labelled, virtually by definition, non-entrepreneurial or traditional farmers. In this way they got the blame for the failure of the O34 Programme. But labelling had also a more practical function as it became a device for excluding 'troublesome' settlers or *problemáticos*. Indeed, a settler being labelled a *problemático* signified that it would become quite difficult for him to gain access to credit.

The model of the 'undeserving client'

A question which I want to address now is 'how is this labelling model related to the model of the 'client' which was introduced by USAID'? To recall, this model conceived of the settler/beneficiary as a client who had to be provided with the necessary conditions - land, credit and an appropriate technological package - to become an entrepreneurial farmer. Yet, I want to show that this model of the 'client', which originally was meant to depoliticize institution-client relations, was endowed with a definitely political meaning at the level of implementation, and that it became an instrument in the hands of the local administrators¹³ for fighting 'undeserving clients'.

As we noted, the O34 Programme had two main goals that of providing settlers with the necessary conditions to become commercially minded settlers and that of overcoming what was perceived as a politically delicate situation in Neguev. Indeed, it can be argued that one major contradiction in the O34 Programme lay in the fact that it was designed to confront a very conflictive situation in the Atlantic zone by combining a policy of careful beneficiary selection and an approach geared to transforming settlers into entrepreneurial farmers in order to fight the influence of leftist organisations such as UPAGRA. At the same time a large number of UPAGRA sympathisers passed the beneficiary selection system. This caused a major problem to front-line administrators which can be formulated in the following terms, 'how to transform unruly clients, such as UPAGRA followers, into entrepreneurial farmers'? We will next see that Fernando Campos viewed this as a contradiction in terms. Consequently the model of the 'client' was transformed into a model of the 'undeserving client'.

The model of the 'undeserving client' as an instrument for exercising social control

Fernando Campos had a distinctive theory of how a peasant should look. This conception of the beneficiary was not unique to him, though, and later I learned that it was quite characteristic of many administrators in the area. On this subject he once confided to me,

"If you want to tell a real farmer from someone who is not, look straight into his eyes. A farmer will lower his sight, will become shy, for he is not accustomed to dealing with people from the city, they are humble, speak with respect. A banana worker is something else, direct in his conduct, insolent. That is the result of the plantation culture and the ideology of the unions which always stresses the negative aspects of everything".

¹³When referring to 'local administrators' I mean the Settlement Head in Neguev and the former Implementation Manager of the O34 programme.

According to him the union leaders in the plantations would tell the plantation workers that they were poor because others were rich, that they were stupid because others were intelligent, that they were ugly because others were beautiful. In his view plantation workers developed an inferiority complex which expressed itself through envy. And he warned me,

"If you meet them they will try to mislead you and tell you stories about their extreme poverty. But the truth is that they are ex-banana workers, people who cannot manage a farm autonomously. They are accustomed to receiving everything from the boss, a cheque every month, a house with water and electricity. They dress well and drink and do terrible things to their wives and children. It is really awful. In return they work a few hours, from 6 to 11 in the morning. They have a lot of free time. They become conceited, rebellious, have no respect for authority. Instead a real farmer works the entire day. And if necessary also at night. "If the cow is sick he will not sleep at all".

This 'cultural problem' had in Fernando Campos' view played a central role in the 034 Programme. He commented that the squatters had received beautiful schools and meeting centers, excellent roads, even a housing programme had been initiated. Yet they had never shown any gratitude. Hence he complained that "unfortunately that is the human material we have to work with in the settlements". At the same time, he had a clear theory of settlement's growth and development in terms of stages, with a strong social Darwinist bent. Once he explained to me,

"You see in Neguev like in so many other settlements that after the political situation has been normalized, a mechanism sets in of natural selection. Settlers who are not real farmers are forced to sell out because they accumulate debts. Although they receive credit and extension, many of them, maybe a majority, have not the ability to develop the enterprise. So they are forced to sell out. Others take their place, often people with more resources. They are obliged to take on the debts their predecessors incurred. So they are better motivated to develop the farm. In fact they have a more entrepreneurial outlook. The result is that after some years a majority of the original population will have disappeared. Only then will the conditions be fulfilled for achieving the objectives of the institution. This process is irreversible, it is a law of nature. The only thing we can do is to alleviate the lot of those who suffer most".

In Fernando Campos' view the problem was that peasant unions such as UPAGRA targeted their actions to a particular type of individual, who due to his plantation mentality was not able to become an entrepreneurial farmer and therefore, was prone to engage into clientelistic relationship with radical organisations and eventually with the IDA. The question as to 'how to transform unruly clients into model beneficiaries' was viewed by him as a contradiction in terms. Such 'human material' was not fit to become entrepreneurial farmers. In fact, we see in the case of Fernando Campos that he sustained a genetic conception of the farmer which, it must be emphasized, was not shared by the front-line workers.

It can be argued that the above-mentioned contradiction of state intervention (the 'normalization' effect vis-à-vis the client-transformation goal) formed the backcloth in which the clash between Fernando and Pablo took place. Credit, as we saw, came to be viewed by Fernando Campos as a tool for undermining the social basis of UPAGRA. In this context, attempts such as those undertaken by Pablo, to apply an individually-oriented approach to credit delivery were seen with much suspicion by Fernando, the

more as he suspected that the credit officials were using their position to establish a clientele.

The upshot, then, was that for Fernando Campos the model of the 'client' was transformed into a core element in an ideology of intervention which was meant to confront 'unruly clients'. In effect, the model of the 'client' was transformed by front-line administrators from a device for depoliticizing institution-client relations into an essentially political instrument for marginalizing 'troublesome' beneficiaries.

Next I want to show that the model of the 'undeserving client' was more than a cognitive construct intended to marginalize radical settlers. It is my argument that the model of the 'undeserving client' was part of an ideology of intervention which also included practices of labelling. To that end I discuss the workings of this ideology of intervention as manifested in the front-line workers' dealings with beneficiaries' within the administrative domain.

The model of the 'client' as a protective device

With respect to the radical leftist settlers the model of the 'client' played an important, 'protective', role. It should be noted that interaction between officials and radical settlers was rare and when it took place it was for the largest part in the field domain. Indeed, the *técnicos* or extensionists in charge of agricultural development programmes had evident difficulties to come to terms with the peasant union UPAGRA and would display a curious ambiguity in relation to them. In fact, two *técnicos* who had experienced problems with Fernando Campos, the Regional Director, due to their supposed involvement with UPAGRA people were the 'maize extensionist' Gabriel Rodriguez and Samuel Lozano, the extensionist in charge of the medicinal plants programme.

When discussing the role of UPAGRA as a peasant union both *técnicos* would stress that they respected and even admired their efforts to defend the farmer's interests, and that they found it totally legitimate and even necessary that such an organization existed as they recognized that the IDA's interests were not necessarily the same as those of the settlers. They argued, however, that they did not agree with their means and their intransigent position. In fact, they were highly critical of their mode of operation. Thus Gabriel would argue,

"UPAGRA has its own ways of dealing with *técnicos*. When you visit them they receive you in a very polite manner, and by telling you a lot about themselves they try to get information out of you. They are aware that you might write a bad report on them. However, they do not seem to mind. When they attend meetings they are surprisingly friendly, while seeking ways to criticize all the institute's ideas. They hope that the official will lose his temper in order to create a conflict, so that they can transform the character of the meeting into one of a tribunal against the institute".

When referring to individual activists they were remarkably negative. In the next chapter a case study of the *técnico*, Samuel Lozano, will be presented and we will see how this tension is manifested in his style of work. Here we will examine how Gabriel conceived of (ex)-UPAGRA activists in the practical context of his work, especially with reference to those who had debts.

Like other front-line workers Gabriel would account for the unwillingness of some UPAGRA leaders to repay their maize debts by referring to personality failures, like drinking habits and their smoking of marihuana. A case in point was that of Porfirio Gutierrez, one of the principal UPAGRA leaders who a few years ago had requested

credit for maize. After the first harvest he paid the debts plus interests. The second harvest, however, proved to be problematic for Porfirio, and he did not repay the credit. He told Gabriel that due to heavy winds output was nil. Gabriel, however, considered that this had not been the case and that losses due to the winds were minimal. In his view Porfirio simply had not been applying the inputs given to him and had sold them. Gabriel saw this as a serious breach of trust, the more so as he had convinced Fernando Campos to give him the credit on the grounds that Porfirio had "cooled down" and left UPAGRA. He pointed to the fact that Porfirio after failing to pay back the credit again became involved in radical activities.

This view of UPAGRA sympathizers as irresponsible settlers was general among the *técnicos*. Settlers who indulged in collective actions like marches and blockades could not be good farmers. In their view they were almost never at their farms, thus there was not much sense in visiting them. UPAGRA, in their view, channelled the feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction of settlers arising out of their personal inabilities. The extensionists, then, would select unproblematic settlers and not UPAGRA followers. This was evident in the case of the chili agricultural programme for which Samuel Lozano set out to select beneficiaries with a 'good record'. Only one UPAGRA follower, out of the 30, was selected, and Samuel Lozano recommended him to distance himself from UPAGRA and "look for better friends".

It must be stressed that this fear of UPAGRA was in the case of most *técnicos* not so much due to a political stance but more an attempt to keep delicate political issues out of their direct relationship with settlers, for the *técnicos* were perfectly able to consider general explanations of settlers' life conditions in terms of a wider political framework. Yet, these explanations were of little use within the implementation context. Although officials would, outside the administrative domain, readily recognize the general validity of "radical" claims, such views were experienced as annoying within the day-to-day context of service delivery.

3.5 Conclusion

We have seen then that a model of the 'client' - or the model of the farmer as a client who has to be serviced and provided with a package in order to encourage him to become an entrepreneurial farmer - is used by three sets of actors in three differing ways. For USAID it was an element in a strategy of depoliticizing the functioning of the IDA and eradicating clientelistic and paternalistic politics. For the General Manager, Don Roberto Arcos, it was an element within a conceptualization of land reform which was meant to advance the implementation of the O34 Programme. For the front-line administrators, Fernando Campos, the model of the 'client' was used for combating the influence of leftist organisations such as UPAGRA. And finally, when the programme proved to be a disaster this model of the 'undeserving client' served as a 'rationalization' for failure, and as a way for casting the blame onto the farmer.

The model of the client, then, changes from being a core element within an attempt by planners to change the current pattern of client-institution relations into an element of an ideology of intervention which serves to conceal the contradictory and conflictive character of state intervention, which was reflected in,

- 1) major errors made in design and implementation
- 2) the impossibility to deny the political character of state intervention in a plantation area as the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica where resources such as land and capital are

monopolized by the banana transnationals, and where state intervention serves as an instrument for social control.

Thus the failure of the O34 Programme was ascribed to the fact that the settlers were not entrepreneurial farmers. In this way it was not necessary to inquire into the major errors in programme planning, implementation and in technological transfer.

What then is the main theoretical conclusion of this chapter? We have seen a description of the administrative process as an intrinsically fragmented and conflictive reality in which a host of petty struggles take place. Yet, it is important to stress that it is precisely within this administrative reality, and in response to the daily problems and conflicts front-line workers are engaged in, that an intervention ideology is sustained. We should see such an ideology not as an coherent set of beliefs which is imposed upon them, but as a set of beliefs and social practices which have differing effects in different social contexts. It has been argued that the ideology of intervention in Neguev encompassed a particular model of the '(undeserving) client', and practices of labelling.

Among other things we have seen that through the intervention ideology the world of the 'clients' was kept apart from that of administrative life. This was the case as settlers were seen as clients who had to be serviced, and not as individuals who often shared the same local preoccupations of the officials. But the ideology of intervention was also instrumental in achieving quite practical effects such as protecting front-line workers from 'troublesome' settlers. It also served as a guide for selecting cooperative beneficiaries. We can, then, pinpoint five different ways in which the ideology of intervention worked:

- 1) As achieving a neat separation between the administrative and the field domains. In this way front-line workers were insulated from the conflicts in the 'field'.
- 2) As concealing the contradictions of state intervention by providing easy explanations for current and ongoing problems concerning programme implementation.
- 3) As a way of rationalizing programme failure. Thus it was argued that the O34 Programme was a failure due to the lack of an entrepreneurial mentality on the part of the settlers. The errors which occurred during programme implementation, and the use of credit as an instrument of social control, were concealed as major factors for explaining programme failure.
- 4) As a way of protecting front-line workers from 'troublesome' settlers such as *Upagristas* who were out to politicize what was viewed by them as 'technical issues'.
- 5) As a way of selecting 'cooperative beneficiaries'.

It should be noted that 1 and 2 refer to a particular way of talking about intervention and the 'client' in the administrative domain; 3 was a way of 'naturalizing' state intervention as a 'technical' and non-political activity; 4 and 5 comprise front-line workers' labelling practices which are useful for carrying out their work.

In the second part of this book (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) I show how this intervention ideology is deconstructed by settlers in social interaction with front-line workers in the field domain. At the same time it will be argued that labelling practices can best be seen as negotiated practices between the bureaucracy and settlers, instead of as an 'objective process'. This is apparent when front-line workers have to legitimize their activities in the field. This is a major theme in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE FRAGMENTED LIFEWORLD OF THE IMPLEMENTOR: FRONT-LINE WORKERS' STYLES OF OPERATION

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter the administrative process of the Neguev Regional Office was discussed, and already some personal characteristics of the incumbents have come to the fore. In addition various conflictive issues were discussed, as well as the role such issues play in the reproduction of what I denominated the model of the client. The local adaptation of this planners' construct by front-line workers and administrators, it was argued, was reflected in modes of labelling and classification which became a central part of the ideology of intervention. It was also pointed out that such an ideology is not some kind of coherent set of conceptions imposed from the outside on front-line workers and which impairs them in recognizing the 'true' significance of their role as 'agents of capitalist expansion and state centralisation'. On the contrary, I argued that such an intervention ideology is a pragmatic response to a set of conflicts and problems which are pervasive within the administrative domain, and are often of a quite trivial character.

Yet, like all ideologies, this ideology of intervention was partially true, in the sense that it corresponded to some of the experiences of front-line workers in the course of their work, and which were much commented upon by them. It was 'ideological' in the sense that it served to simplify the complex reality of the non-administrative setting. And, as I show in this chapter, front-line workers were often forced to acknowledge this, especially when encountering the everyday life reality of farmers in the field. In this chapter it is argued that an ideology of intervention besides comprising a model of the 'client' and labelling practices, includes practices of legitimization. Thus I concentrate on front-line workers' efforts to gain the trust of farmers or to enforce their compliance through other means, while legitimizing their actions as state representatives. To that effect I focus is on the client-official interface.¹

¹See for a discussion of a number of notions which are central to this chapter, such as client-official interface, operational styles and lifeworld chapter 1 and 5.

On front-line worker's operational styles

My aim in this chapter is that of analysing the differing ways in which front-line workers internalize the ideology of intervention, while developing styles of operation.

The situation of front-line workers is quite unique in comparison to desk-front workers, since they are confronted (and may even participate) in their everyday functioning with different sets of social commitments: those of the institution, of organised peasant groups, of regional political movements, etc. Although they might subscribe to the ideals of one or more of these groups, it is not possible for them to adopt them as guiding principles in their work. In contrast to institutional managers who in developing an operational style strive to develop a general view for dealing with the political, institutional and social pressures they are subject to, front-line workers seldom achieve such a degree of consistency. In other words, a tension remains between the various sets of principles and commitments they hold to. The question, then, becomes, 'how do front-line workers develop ways to handle these conflicting demands, while complying with a particular intervention ideology?'. As argued in the course of this chapter, the result is often a fragmented lifeworld.

At this stage it is useful to introduce the notion of 'locality'. It refers to a variety of issues or problematics which have to do with the different ways in which local people internalize the wider political or policy issues within their lifeworlds. Thus the issue concerning the price policy of maize is given a local political meaning which is expressed in the discussion on the 'right of peasants to sell their maize to the marketing board in Guácimo'. Similarly, perceived contradictions in the IDA's land distribution practices are locally translated in terms of 'the survival of the peasantry in the Atlantic zone'. Such issues, thus, become central topics in farmers' discussions on the 'role of institutions' in development and more specifically on the role of the IDA in resolving the 'land question'. As we will see in the case studies, the local meaning that is attributed to issues regarding the rights and obligations vis-à-vis the state cannot be avoided by front-line workers in their relationship with clients. Indeed, the result may be a potential politicization of such relationships since radical peasant leaders are skilled in using arguments which are part of the official discourse. As a consequence front-line workers develop particular attitudes.

In the case studies I distinguish three front-line workers' operational styles; first, the authoritarian style of the *agraristas* geared to exercising social control; second the propositional attitude of the extensionist directed to the establishment of trust relations; and, third, the negotiatory and intermediational style of the social worker. In the respective case studies we will see the degree to which the ideology of intervention, as manifested in the bureaucrat's conceptions of their work, bears upon the client-official interface.

4.2 The Agrarista and the Administrative Approach

The *agraristas* are the officials in the settlements in charge of the selection of settlers, and legal issues relating to the purchase and sale of plots (*encargados de asuntos agrarios*). Functionally, they fall under the section of 'selection of beneficiaries' of the *departamento de estudios basicos* at headquarter's in San José, that is the department that carries out basic studies - in the field of agronomy, soils and human geography - designed to create the conditions for an orderly development of settlements. Besides dealing with legal issues at the local level and carrying out selection studies of

prospective beneficiaries, the *agraristas* are in charge of consciousness-raising activities. The diverse nature of these activities entails that the *agraristas* have to deal with the several relevant departments in San José as well as those in the regional office, and with the settlers.

One characteristic of the *agraristas* is the uniqueness of their function in the settlement. They have to communicate quite often with the settlement head, who in Neguev is also the regional director, in order to establish a well-defined policy with regard to land. Their work requires that they visit the central offices of the IDA, in the capital San José, regularly. This, combined with the fact that they often carry out the selection studies in different parts of the country, makes of them a highly mobile group. In addition the job requires that they have to maintain the confidence of Francisco Campos, the regional director. At the same time they usually enjoy a large degree of autonomy in carrying out their job. This entails that each has a relatively large degree of power to help or hinder land transactions.

This case study of the chief *agrarista*², Moisés Knight, starts with a discussion of his local background, and his involvement in a regional union of *agraristas* of the Atlantic zone. This will be followed by an analysis of his operational style.

Local background

Moisés is 24 years old and comes from the neighbouring village of Guácimo. Before moving to Neguev he worked for two years in another settlement which belongs to the same O34 Programme. Before, he had worked for a banana company as an administrative clerk and attended university for one year with the aid of a scholarship. However, due to family financial obligations, he had to interrupt his studies and decided to look for a job. His mother, a Jehovah's Witness, is divorced and he has two younger brothers of school age, and a sister is studying law and works for a government institution.

He entered the IDA when the O34 Programme was looking for young people from the area with at least a high school education. He applied for the job of *agrarista* in the El Indio settlement and was accepted thanks to the recommendation of a fellow villager who was also working as an official in that settlement. Moisés was given the opportunity to continue following courses of public administration at the University of Costa Rica in San José, and for that purpose he received one day free a week.

Moisés had a place in the guesthouse at the Neguev settlement. However, he almost always sleeps in Guácimo. There he has a group of young friends who consist largely of teachers and employees in government institutions (such as the municipality), and some working for private companies. They all attended the same secondary school in Guácimo and belong to the *Liberación* party. When they come together they chat and joke. Yet, they are conscious that they belong to a special group, reflected in their criticism of the 'conformism' of their fellow villagers, in for example, their acceptance of the commercial values transmitted by television and magazines. The following is a typical statement made when discussing with his three teacher friends.

"The problem with much of the youth here is that they would work for weeks to buy 'brand jeans'. You cannot appear at the university in San José if you do not wear a pair of fancy jeans. They think that in those jeans they are modern. But they do not realize that they are deceiving themselves, that their mind is distracted

²In 1988, when the O34 programme ended and the Neguev settlement office became a regional office an assistant *agrarista* was employed. Since then numerous settlements were serviced in Neguev.

from their real situation, from the problems most of them have to finish the study, to find work. You see the same here in Guácimo, most of our youth are not conscious of the real problems they encounter in life. They grow up as conformists. The result is that they do not have much confidence in themselves, that they become dependent on consumption values".

It was possible to detect in Moisés conceptions a certain ambivalence towards the social movements of the area. He belongs to a native middle class dependent on government and plantation company jobs. He is aware of the social neglect to which the area has been exposed by the government and the fragility of the economic base of the region. Yet, it is the same government and the resumed banana activity that has offered them jobs and new educational opportunities. This ambivalence is expressed in a highly anti-communist political stance combined with a rather ambivalent position regarding the monopolization of land and other resources by outsiders. This ideological position is exemplified in the way Moisés talks about his early involvement in a peasant organisation that eventually organized the invasion of the Neguev settlement,

" When I was at secondary school we organized a march supporting UPAGRA. In those times I agreed with their actions. The truth is that they were more committed to the people and to the cause of the poor peasants in the Atlantic zone than now. Later, however, they became involved in leftist politics and betrayed all the people that trusted them. Their struggle became a political one. They wanted to amass power and to that end they needed the people's support. But it was no longer for ideals that they were fighting but for an alien political ideology. When that became clear to me I distanced myself from them and became involved in democratic politics".

As will become clear throughout the case study, Moisés' interest for social justice originated in a strong self-consciousness as a young black from the Atlantic zone, better educated than most others and eager to reach out for opportunities that were not available to the older generations. In fact, Moisés belongs to a generation of young blacks, active in various social and political fields and very interested in the future of the Atlantic zone.

The Union of Agraristas of the Atlantic zone

One major initiative in which he was involved was the establishment of a 'Union of *Agraristas* of the Atlantic zone'. This was a joint endeavour of the *agraristas* of that area. The union's main objectives were the introduction of a recording system aimed at the development of clear procedures in the process of decision-making, and the improvement of the social and economic position of *agraristas*.

This initiative is of interest as it was the only attempt I encountered by front-line workers to create an independent and professional organization at the regional level. Moreover, the union was not at all designed as a trade union type of association directed to the defence of the interests of the members, but as a support group for policy and planning activities. The union's goals, then, were those of promoting the establishment of more efficient work procedures, the design of local level studies and the establishment of effective linkages with individual and group settlers. In regard to this last point they put forward a strong argument to the effect that it was precisely the *agraristas* who were able to accomplish this goal.

The Regional Union of *Agraristas* was officially formed at the start of 1986 with the direct aim to offer the possibility to "maintain a professional relationship with

colleagues". In the first letter addressed to IDA's General Manager and Executive President its general objectives are stated in the following way,

"Our tasks are not only circumscribed to dealing with pressure groups, carrying out censuses and preliminary studies of landholdings, selection and legal studies, conducting adjudications and titling for particular properties, etc., but the real object of our task is 'man himself' with all his peculiarities. This is the relationship IDA-PEASANT, which in the field reality actually is IDA-*Agrarista*-PEASANT. Given the nature of our functions and the delicate and responsible character of our tasks we are worried that the function of *Agrarista* is not given a specific [professional] classification. To that effect we request your support [letter addressed to the IDA's Executive President].

Two types of studies were deemed to be urgent. First, the establishment of an inventory of institutions and enterprises linked to the agrarian sector. The aim was to provide information about the IDA's activities and about the laws governing the settlement sector. In this way it was expected that the enforcement of the law against attempts by private persons and enterprises to acquire cheap land or crops (through contract-farming) in settlements would be facilitated as well as an effective coordination with other institutions. Second, the undertaking of a list of individuals who had engaged in land speculation practices, who should be denied permission to become beneficiaries again.

This attempt of the *agraristas* to improve their status as professionals expresses their special role as front-line workers involved in the most important tasks of the institution: that of selecting beneficiaries and seeing to it that land was distributed according to the law. That was the reason why the *agraristas* - more than any other functionary - had to be officials who enjoyed the confidence of the regional director. At any rate a problematic *agrarista*, - contrary to a problematic social worker - could not maintain himself in his position. Not surprisingly, then, the *agrarista* tended to be someone who had to adapt himself constantly to the official institutional ideology.

The agrarista and the ideology of intervention

Moisés was not different from the other *agraristas* in this respect. At the same time, however, he had a distinctive opinion as to what the objective of his function was, which clearly differed from that of his superior. Thus he would assert; " We must help the settler to become independent from the IDA, but that does not mean that we should merely make commercial farmers out of them. No, the social aspect of their enterprise should also be stimulated. If we help them all to become entrepreneurs they will be more busy with making money and fighting each other than with cooperating in communal organisations. What we need is a combination of both aspects, the commercial and the social in order to fight social injustice and to improve agricultural production".

These views belonged to a wider understanding of the colonization problematic which manifested itself in a strong believe in the importance of bringing about social justice through the distribution of land. This contrasted to that of his superiors who held to the view that the principal role of the IDA was that of educating settlers to become agricultural entrepreneurs. Thus he once remarked, "I do not subscribe to this idea of giving incentives to entrepreneurial farmers. If you hold to this view you will not be able to prevent the expansion of poverty in the country, and injustice within the settlement areas. The entrepreneurial aspect is an important one, but not paramount". In effect, the regional union of *agraristas* had been reflecting about the issue, and had

taken a stand against those within the union who took the view that it was necessary to orient policy towards farmers with more success potential.

Moisés also had clear ideas of his tasks and the way in which he should fulfill them. He also had distinct views on how the regional office should function in order to improve the administration. To begin with, he considered that that was his principal obligation, to hold to the law of the IDA and the formal legal procedures. At the same time, he was conscious of the fact that he had ample discretionary room in applying institutional rules, in view of his special knowledge of local conditions. Indeed, he enjoyed showing me, with the help of specific cases, how he translated the general institutional objectives according to his own interpretation of the situation. As he would argue,

"The problem is that the law does not provide answers for all situations. The law is too rigid and does not allow for all possible cases of conflict. For that reason you are forced to develop your own methods in order to enforce the law and for the benefit of the institute and the beneficiaries. Yet, you must be conscious that when making a decision on, say, a conflict on boundaries, deciding in favour of one means deciding against the other".

One issue in which he was very principled, at least when he arrived in Neguev, bore upon the practice that had developed there to permit (and many argued even stimulate) the sale or property transfer of plots. He made it clear that he disagreed with his predecessors as to this local policy. Once, he told me,

When I had just arrived there would be everyday a queue of 5 or 6 persons waiting to arrange such transfers (*traspasos*). I made it a custom to send them all away by telling them that I wanted to spend my time on other things, so as to demotivate them. In this way the rate of transfers decreased enormously and at the moment I have only two *traspasos* a week. The reason I am against transfers is twofold. First, I am convinced that this is the only way to stop land speculation in the settlements. And second, by permitting such sales we stimulate people to invade other small haciendas, *fincas*, in order to sell again".

Although sympathetic to the 'peasantist' objectives of the IDA, Moisés was not naive as to the settlers' capabilities to manipulate the relationship with the officials. In effect, he would be very strict in his relationships with settlers, both on his visits as well as during office hours. I accompanied him several times on office days in the field. Twice a week he would set up office at the communal building of a distant sector. On one such occasion he gave me an interesting picture of settler's behaviour when dealing with functionaries. He commented: "Settlers never tell us the truth. They will always present the facts in a very different way from how they are. For that reason I prefer to go to their farms. Then I can see with my own eyes a lot of things; about their lifestyle, whether they are good farmers, whether they have additional resources, and so forth".

On such office-days-in-the-field the Neguev front-line workers would dedicate the morning to visiting farms and in the afternoon they would mostly sit chatting waiting for settlers who might come with problems, etc. Sometimes they would be joined by the local teachers. For the rest these *técnicos* would stay together and make little contact with settlers. Moisés, by contrast would have a busy day attending settlers who complained about disputes, or were concerned about bureaucratic issues, or with selling or buying plans. And, sometimes he could react quite irritatedly. Thus once when a settler came to him to complain about his problems with his neighbour who, as he argued, was not only wrong but totally unwilling to consider the issue in a civilized

way, Moisés fulminated against him; "The problem with you all is that you do not organize yourself and that you expect that we can resolve everything for you. I was here last Saturday explaining the procedure that would be followed in distributing the communal housing plots, and almost no one came. You probably did not come neither. But when you have a problem then you need me".

The settler then answered in an accommodating tone arguing that it was his intention to do everything according to the rules, that he was no communist and that he would be present at the next information meeting.

Contradictions between the bureaucratic ethos and the local lifeworld

As might be expected Moisés' way of dealing with settlers was not always consistent, since he had to take contextual and personal factors into consideration. Thus, what often appeared as a rather uncomplicated case would later appear to be complex and liable to differing interpretations. There was, in my view, a contradiction in his mode of approaching settlers. In his eagerness to make sense of particular situations in order to find a quick solution he would narrow down the problem so as to be able to describe it in causal terms; for example the lack of coordination between central departments and regional office, or the lack of discipline on the part of the settlers, or the unwillingness of settlers and (some) officials to follow the rules. However, his own practical understanding of and continuous involvement in rural life in the Atlantic zone forced him to interpret situations within a broader interpretive framework.

This, I assumed, was the reason for his contrasting and changeable moods; from being strict and bureaucratic in a disinterested way, to gay and playful, to overly concerned and highly committed. Moisés, after all came from the zone and he knew many people in the settlement. He himself was a villager who had grown up in the same conflictive environment and he was perfectly aware of the different lifeworlds and local frames of reference of different types of settlers. Sometimes I would be surprised by his sudden interest in the personal circumstances of settlers and conversations would ensue which, due to their local significance, had little meaning to me, as reference would be made to characters and events I (as yet) did not have knowledge of.

Nevertheless, it is striking that when discussing particular cases, in spite of his awareness of the complexity of the situation Moisés would always account for them within a bureaucratic framework. This did not mean that he was not prepared to take up political issues, or to criticize shortcomings in the functioning of the institute, but these were seen as irrelevant factors outside the bureaucratic interpretive framework. This led in my view to a sort of ambiguity in his style of operating, on the one hand his continuous appeal to this bureaucratic ethos, on the other hand his inability to apply it and/or comply with it.

Before discussing a few occasions in which this ambiguity came to the fore it should be remarked that not all settlers were treated in the same (distanced and strict) way by the *agrarista*. This was especially the case among those who received advice and support from functionaries in the central departments in San José, and who had to deal with the *agrarista* in order to normalize their legal situation. These clients often saw the *agrarista* as one of the many steps in the process of securing land. In having access to capital resources and institutional networks they were much less dependent than poor settlers on the local bureaucracy.

Attempting to stop land speculation

One initiative Moisés undertook after arriving in Neguev was to set up information meetings (*charlas*) for settlers in order to clarify the policy he was to follow. These meetings were organized by him and the social worker but also various *técnicos* appeared to talk about their programmes. The first meeting was held in Santa Rosa and was attended by a large group of settlers. Among these were UPAGRA sympathizers and other settlers critical of the IDA's activities. The meeting was well organized with leaflets specifying the role of the IDA and the rights and obligations of settlers. Data were provided on the number of families that had received land from the institute so far, and on the importance of land for the peasants for maintaining social peace. Moisés in his contribution talked about the various facets of his work. At a certain moment he declared his intention to put an end to land speculation in declaring,

"I can assure you that from now on illegal sales of land are finished. I will see to it that only on rare occasions will farms be sold and that the price paid does not exceed the value of the improvements. This is the only way to preclude people enriching themselves at the cost of other landless peasants who are also waiting for land".

After saying this a few people intervened. One of them was Juan José, a communal leader and former member of the board of UPAGRA. He wished Moisés luck with his fresh approach and commented; "Moisés, you are right to stop speculation in land but you should know that it was your predecessors who stimulated the sale of land by settlers. They themselves served as intermediaries and asked money for it. That is not a secret here, it is public knowledge".

Moisés replied that he did not like his predecessors to be defamed. He was aware that the former *agrarista* held to a different policy. However, that was something of the past, and worrying about that would not resolve anything. He concluded, "what we need now is unity within the community and with us to ensure the progress of the village".

The case of a disputed plot in Santa Rosa

On arriving in Neguev, Moisés was confronted with various cases of land purchases by people who clearly did not qualify. Thus, in his zeal to introduce law and order in the settlement he pledged that no irregular transactions would be permitted any more. One typical case of such a deal could be found in Santa Rosa where a plot had recently been bought by an entrepreneurial family, the Arias, owners of a contiguous plantation who were interested in buying the plot in order to gain direct access to the road to Rio Jimenez. Officially it was one of the 'landless' sons who applied for the plot and to that end Moisés' predecessor had been contacted.

Meanwhile, the whole community of La Lucha knew about the attempts of the Arias family to extend their landholding at the expense of the rights of landless peasants and this was seen as one more example of the inability of the IDA to pursue its objective of social justice. When confronted with this situation Moisés promised that if he could not stop this family from taking over the plot he would resign from the institute. The situation was as follows; The Arias family had virtually been given permission to legalize the purchase of the plot thanks to the intermediation of a member of the Board of Directors of the IDA. Moisés argued that he could postpone the actual approval since it was the regional office which had to apply for it, and he was by no means prepared to do it. Moreover, he asserted that in the case of his being ordered to start the procedure, the regional office had the right to appeal to the Board.

Even if this appeal was rejected he would write a declaration making it clear that he carried out the order against his will. This attitude, indeed, made much impression in La Lucha and the plot became a test case of the capacity and ability of the new '*agrarista*' to apply the rules of the game to the locality's benefit.

One group that was interested in the plot was a small association of women who planned to grow commercial crops cooperatively, and therefore proposed to rent the plot. This women's group had the support of UPAGRA and a San José based NGO specializing in assistance to poor women. It was also argued that a benefit of putting this plot at the disposal of an organized communal group was that a more direct path to the village of Rio Jimenez was assured for the other settlers.

With regard to the women's group Moisés had his doubts. He had little confidence in the capacity of a small group of women to develop a whole plot of 20 has. productively. Moreover, he was afraid that this could be a stratagem by UPAGRA to appropriate the plot for developing their own projects. Moisés, however, maintained good contacts with several of the women (one of them was at the time member of the Board of Directors of UPAGRA), and he displayed a certain sympathy for them.

The relationship with the women's group became, over the period of a year, rather troublesome as there was a set of expectations concerning the support they might receive from the IDA. They were not only interested in acquiring the 'Arias' plot but also wanted to rent a small plot in the communal area in order to grow vegetables and rice. In addition, some of the women were involved in legal disputes over land.

It is therefore interesting to look at the case of one such woman as it exemplified the relationship Moisés entertained with the women's group.

The case of a divorced woman settler

Anita came every week to the office-day-in-the-field in Santa Rosa to discuss issues concerning the women's group and her own problem. Anita was involved in a conflict over land with her former husband and father of her son, whom she had thrown out of the house because of his drinking habits and unwillingness to contribute to the household. Anita lived on part of the plot (3 hectares) which they both acquired after the invasion. The ex-husband, however, sold without her consent, the other 4 hectares of the farm to a neighbour. She was able to stop this transaction on the grounds that the property belonged to both and that he had left the family. Then he started harassing her in various ways and, among other things, he wrote a letter to the National Infant Welfare Service accusing her of neglecting her child and spending the whole day 'on the street'. These arguments were used against her in his attempts to get hold of the farm.

Anita had been fighting the case tenaciously before the Infant Welfare Service and the IDA. It was not difficult for her to show evidence to the former institution that the accusations against her were foul slander, since she made a living by selling clothes in the area. In addition a public letter was written and signed by neighbours and many other members of the community attesting to her good reputation as a person, and as a mother. Yet, her legal situation remained difficult, for the reason that there were doubts as to whether she was capable of developing her farm productively in view of the lack of family labour and her dependence on off-farm work. She consequently argued that she was strong enough to engage in commercial agriculture and that she was only waiting for credit to do so. On the farm she was growing food crops and she had a cow.

The dispute had been going on for years and it was up to the Board of Directors to take a decision. But her ex-husband had, through a lawyer, been pressuring the IDA's legal department to decide in his favour. With regard to the part he sold, he

argued that he had to do it in order to pay for the improvements (*mejoras*)³ due to the former owner, and he insisted that she had to return to him half this amount, adding that it amounted to more than one million Colones. In response to this she declared that the value of the farm was less than 200 thousand and that anyway he had not cared to pay the entire debt. She insisted that, given the fact that she was still living in the settlement and that it was against the law to sell settlement land, she should be given the whole plot.

The dispute became a long-drawn out one and when Moisés suggested that he could only allot her the 3 hectares, she lost confidence in being able to get her rights through legal means. She then turned to UPAGRA which offered her legal advice and accepted her claim as one more to be discussed in a next round of negotiations with the institution.

In fact Moisés was limited in his ability to support Anita, since as he argued, it was extremely difficult to reverse decisions that had been already made, especially if there had been a financial transaction. More importantly, however, the fact that Anita was being supported by an UPAGRA lawyer and that she was a member of the women's association restricted his space for manoeuvre since it would be highly deleterious to him if the regional director thought that he was bowing to the pressure of this leftist peasant union.

Losing the confidence of the settlers

In the meantime the women's group applied for assistance from the section for women and family (*mujeres y familia*) of the Training and Organisation Department in the IDA. They had a female social worker working with women's groups in the Atlantic zone and they gave her responsibility over the group in La Lucha. The women voiced their demands about the 'Arias plot' and subsequently she promised to put forward the issue in San José. This, however, led to a conflict between the Training and Organisation Department in San José and Fernando Campos who maintained that this women's group should not be given assistance since it was supported by *Upagristas*. The result was that the social worker was forbidden to continue assisting the women.

A year later Moisés had changed his attitude into a more bureaucratic one and at long last agreed to approve the purchase by the Arias' son, under the condition that he should move to the farm with his family and that the plot be not converted into a banana plantation. Later on, it became rather easy for Moisés to distance himself from the clients' complaints and pressures as the regional office's service area was expanded considerably and the weekly visits to the sectors of Santa Rosa and El Peje were suspended. His task load grew considerably heavier with the result that he had to deal with cases more and more in the office. Consequently, the emphasis of his work shifted from one of *enlace* (middleman) between the settler and the office to that of processing routine cases, carrying out preparation studies and serving as a link man between the regional director and the field.

In that period he received several written requests from the women's association to adjudicate the plot in their favour. One recurring theme in the letters was the egoistic attitude of men, both on the peasant and the institutional side, and their unwillingness to do something on behalf of the women. In one of these letters they defended their claims by reason of the *machista* attitude of men, settlers or

³Officially a settler has not the right to sell the plot but only the 'improvements' s/he made on the farm, such as trees, perennial crops, a house, a barn etc.

functionaries. The only thing Moisés had arranged for them was the lease to the asociação of a small plot in the communal centre for the purpose of growing rice.

Summing up, his attitude to these women in Santa Rosa was ambiguous like his attitude toward UPAGRA sympathizers. On the one hand, he saw himself as the representative of the rightful aims of the institution, and as a loyal implementor of particular, if quite formal, procedures. On the other hand it became more and more difficult to ignore the specific practices of bureaucratic control he was meant to carry out. This was evident in his relationship with the members of the women's association, and, consequently, with a broader sector of the community. After all, he had committed himself to stop the operation of a market in land. And in his zeal to demonstrate his determination, and his capacity of action he pledged not to permit the Arias family to appropriate the plot under dispute. Moisés lost much trust in the community over this and many settlers started to express their mistrust of his good intentions. Thus I remember that once, after talking to Anita, he jokingly said to her that she, as a single woman, could well look after herself. She, then, meaningfully looked at him and replied, "it is you who should watch out and act conscientiously".

Moisés was aware of the expectations that existed, and his reaction was to avoid exposure to possible demands and claims by settlers. He was perfectly conscious of the problems involved in dealing with issues of justice in an institutional way. In fact, this remained a common subject of conversation between us. In these conversations Moisés would lay much stress on the need to follow formal and universalistic criteria for decision making instead of making institutional policy secondary to the ad-hoc needs of exercising social control. The upshot, then, was that ultimately the social control aspects of the *agrarista's* functions became more important than that of serving as a 'translator' of the settlers' needs and as a mediator between them and the institution. This was evidenced by Moisés' ultimate choice to comply with the regional office's day-to-day policy and by his inability to accommodate to local conceptions of justice.

Discussion

In examining the evolution of the current *agrarista's* operational style it could be argued that it was predictable and that it came to resemble that of his predecessor. In effect, the '*agrarista*' - more than any other functionary - stands very close to the regional director, and hence is continually impelled to show his allegiance. Consequently, the *agrarista* tends to be someone who has to adapt himself constantly to official institutional ideology.

As a result, Moisés, when forced to choose between accommodating to the less idealistic practices of institutional life and the legitimate pressures of his beneficiaries, saw himself forced to adapt to the everyday institutional exigencies of his job. Furthermore, this choice was strengthened by his personal circumstances - he got married and his wife was pregnant - and the concomitant financial obligations. Thus, much of his attention was diverted to the purchase of a plot and the securing of a mortgage for building a house. Furthermore, to improve his career chances he became more involved in local politics.

This situation led to various complaints from settlers. He had lost the trust from a large sector of settlers in Neguev, and accusations of corruption were made by farmers in other settlements, in what seemed an effective attempt to destroy his reputation as an energetic and honest functionary. Whether these accusations were based on 'true facts' or were just slander does not concern us here. However, it does point to an increased distance between Moisés and the settlers, belying his initial concern for

justice and equality and attendant aspiration to being the 'translator' of the settlers' needs to the institution.

In concluding, the case of the '*agrarista*' shows that some functionaries are more ready to adhere to - or internalize - the ideology of state intervention than other functionaries, so much so that they are inclined to strive for a close correspondence between their personal conceptions and the exigencies of their work. To that end they are prepared to downplay or ignore the contradictions arising in the fulfillment of their jobs. This way of putting the issue might be interpreted as a form of social determinism, suggesting that the practical and ideological choices Moisés makes can be explained in terms of his position in an institutional structure. However, the situation is much more complex than such a view suggests and it is my argument that the internalization of the state's point of view is the outcome of a series of choices the official himself makes. In talking about policy internalization - or the internalization of the ideology of state intervention - I do not have in mind something such as a specific psychological mechanism by which subjects incorporate the bureaucratic world view into their everyday thinking, forming part of a more general process of institutional socialization. It cannot be stressed enough that an actor oriented approach which pays special attention to actors' interpretations and discourses must reject such a type of functionalist analysis. Yet, In setting up the argument in terms of 'internalization'⁴, I attempt to show that some administrative practices - in this case the practices of social control necessary for the maintenance of a legal order in the settlement - are more central to intervention than others, and that they therefore require a strong adherence to state policy on the part of the actors involved in them. I argue that such an adherence is both of a principled and a practical nature, and that the success of the functionary is dependent on the degree to which he/she is able to attain the highest degree of correspondence with the prevailing style of state intervention, to such an extent as to become the life embodiment of state intervention. As I attempted to show in the case study this signifies a process of internalization of state policy, not in the sense of learning their formal meaning, but by developing a practical ability to adapt and if necessary transform given policies, in order to make them meaningful in the day-to-day reality of implementation.

4.3 The *Técnico* and the Organizing Approach

Samuel, the *técnico* in charge of medicinal plants and pineapple programmes, comes from San Vito, a coffee producing area in the southern part of the country which is known as one of the few successful attempts to promote colonization by Europeans in Costa Rica, and where his father is a small coffee farmer and cattle holder. Given this background Samuel liked to define himself as a *campesino*. For that reason he argued that he preferred to work with smallholders in the field than in the office; and that most of the satisfaction he had in his work derived from the appreciation he received from the farmers he worked with.

⁴I take the concept of 'internalization' from Arce (1989).

The Medicinal Plants Programme

Samuel was employed at the IDA's headquarters in San José and sent to Neguev for the explicit purpose of establishing a medicinal plants, spices and dyes programme. This programme, Samuel's first, was initiated in 1982-83 by an agronomist who worked for the IDA, Alberto Ramos, who was in charge of setting up the programme at the national level.

Samuel had already met this agronomist during his studies while he was doing an obligatory course called "communal work". For this course students would do practical work for the benefit of a community or an institution. During the preparation of field work in two Indian reserves in his native province, Samuel went to the national museum where Alberto Ramos, who was already considered as an expert in the area of medicinal plants, was working. Since then they have established very close working relations.

In the Indian reserves he dedicated himself to collecting and classifying such plants on the basis of the Indians' own indigeneous knowledge. To that end he spent 15 days in each Indian community living with an Indian family. This was an important experience for him and he recalls, "these people are highly reserved and if you want to gain their confidence you have to make a lot of effort. Yet, ultimately I developed a deep appreciation of them and I think they also valued my work".

After Samuel graduated from the university, Alberto Ramos, who in the meantime had been employed by the IDA, made arrangements to get him a job on his medicinal plants programme. However, it was very difficult and they had to wait until someone known to them was appointed to the Board of Directors to get the necessary support. Finally he was transferred to Neguev in 1984, where he set out to select all the plants with medicinal properties from all over the area in order to establish a demonstration plot. As he recalls, "I started to relate to the plants, for I did not know much about them in this area. I had to detect them and learn their names, the scientific and popular ones".

Samuel and Alberto planned to promote the cultivation of medicinal plants for commercial purposes. To that end they had connections with a Swiss exporter. After some time they had a nice variety of plants (such as *Cuanilama*, *Selva Virgen*, *Sauco*, *Frailecillo*, *Zacate de Limon*, *Oregano*) on small plots of 100 sq.mtrs, while they were experimenting with various planting distances, stalks, etc. They had already some basic infrastructure, such as a dryer. Then Samuel started to look for settlers willing to grow these plants. In the beginning it was decided to work with 4 different settlers, each on half a hectare and with 5 different plant types. However, as soon as the plants were ready to be collected the problems began. To begin with the dryer could not cope with the large volume, and finally, it appeared that the Swiss had not the required connections for exporting the plants. Certainly, he was convinced that there was a large international market for those plants, but he did not realize how difficult it was to enter it. According to Samuel they could have won a court case against the Swiss, but it was not worth the effort. For him this was a bitter experience. As he comments, "My conscience said to me that I had to find a way of getting rid of that plant material while paying the farmers for it. Otherwise I would lose their trust". Thus he decided to buy the plants himself. "I had established friendship relations with several settlers and I knew that they would be very dissappointed in me if I told them that there was no market for the plants". In fact, he paid the farmers the prices agreed with money he borrowed, thus incurring a heavy personal financial loss.

From then on emphasis was placed on the social function of the programme; that of providing home grown medicines (against headaches, nervous illness, etc.) - some of

them for preventive use (for children and the elderly) - to the farmers. To that end they had planned that the programme should be related to a number of educational activities. Settlers were offered the plants for free. Altogether some 60 gardens were established in the settlement. In addition a communal garden was set up where settlers could examine and choose the plants they wanted, and various field days (*días de campo*) were organized. In addition gardens were established on the school grounds in collaboration with the teachers. It was hoped that they would explain to the children the various uses of the plants and that the latter would take them home. In fact, the teachers played an important role in approaching settlers who were interested in the programme.

In this way Samuel became known in the community and established a working relationship with many settlers. Yet, only a minority of settlers continued with the programme, as many lost interest due to the absence of a commercial outlet. Although some efforts were made to find a commercial market no trustworthy exporter was found. After some time demand for the plants decreased sharply. Later, when he became overly involved in other crop programmes, the medicinal programme came to a standstill.

Nonetheless, Samuel considers that some success was achieved. For instance one settler in Milano, who has about 4 hectares of Oregano, earned an income by selling it in the producers' market in San José. He also provided medicinal plants to UPAGRA, the peasant union, that some time ago organized a festival in which women with the most beautiful gardens were awarded a prize. Samuel would proudly assert that all material came from one of his demonstration plots. However, it became clear to him that men were predominantly interested in commercial programmes. Thus, Samuel discerned different underlying interests between women and men with regard to livelihood strategies. As he put it, "With men you have to talk in Colones -the Costa Rican currency - because they are mostly interested in money. Women are more interested in family affairs, cheap medicines, the opportunity to have a small additional income. Medicinal plants is a programme that demands much work, and men are not going to provide it if the monetary reward does not correspond to the amount of labour they expend.

But he also had problems in other settlements with a few women's groups assisted by the "women and development" section of the IDA. The social workers had promised them good profits in a short time, if they would only organise themselves. However, although the amounts were small enough to sell in a regional market the matter was not so easy, as the plants required much careful selection to provide a good product. Once Alberto Ramos and himself were accused of deceiving the women after the produce fetched a much lower price than the women expected. Marketing, Samuel pointed out, was a profession in itself, and he comments that in their enthusiasm they made an error by suggesting to the women that the main difficulty was that of growing the plants. Indeed, he recognizes that as yet he had been too paternalistic in his relations with settlers. The main lesson of this experience for him was that production and marketing problems could not be resolved by the extensionists only, but required close cooperation between them and the beneficiaries.

The chili programme

After this, not so positive experience, came the chili programme. Samuel, by then, had become convinced that the only way to solve the livelihood problems of the settlers was by developing a mix of cash crops which were suited to smallholder cultivation and profitable at the same time. From the beginning he had been looking for a spice

that would attract the commitment of a wider group of farmers, but he could not find any which combined good market possibilities with agronomic conditions.

His choice for the red pepper - or chili - was rather casual. Once a settler commented to him that he was thinking of cultivating chili. He told Samuel that close to Pocora some farmers were growing it and they had no difficulty in selling it. This interested him much and he went to Pocora where he inspected a few plots and talked to the purchasers. He also went to Pocora to talk with the manager of a processing company, Kamouk. It appeared that the manager was a very open person and they immediately got along well. On that same occasion they talked of a possible production area, possibly 50 hectares. Later, they reduced the planned area to 25 hectares, in view of the high yields that were to be expected. Actual yields, however, appeared to be higher than even the most optimistic projections.

There was not much available data on the hot chili, only ASBANA - the National Association of Banana Producers - had been doing research on it. With the help of information that was provided by the farmers growing it Samuel made a cost calculation (*avlo*) which he presented to the Credit Fund. It must be remarked that he had a good relationship with functionaries from the Fund in San José, and they decided to extend credit for the programme. Subsequently he initiated the search for possible programme beneficiaries. As he tells it, "First I talked to settlers I knew from the medicinal plants programme, but there was not much interest. Then I made lists of the best farmers with the help of two other *técnicos*. On the basis of that list I succeeded in finding 25 beneficiaries".

However, many settlers had lingering doubts. Chilies were a new and rather unknown crop in the area and all other previous programmes had been failures. Since a few decided to plant half an hectare they reached only 17 has of the 25 we planned. At any rate, there was much distrust. For example, the first credit delivery was not accepted by the settlers because they wanted to have more information. Ultimately they fared very well, "much better than any of us would have dreamed. In fact, I would have already been relieved if it had not become another failure. In fact, this was the first really successful programme in the settlement and some beneficiaries made a profit of as much as 600 thousand colones". Samuel calculated that altogether it had made the settlement 7 to 8 millions richer. Indeed, this had significant consequences for him. As he comments; "Since then, the roles changed and instead of me pursuing them, settlers would start asking me if they could participate in the programme. But the market was restricted and I could not include any more beneficiaries".

In effect, a major advantage of red peppers is that they grow on infertile soils, provided these have a good drainage. Yet, they are actually not suited to humid tropical areas since they are highly vulnerable to a fungus called *malla* which as yet cannot be controlled. It is a question of time before *malla* comes in, after which chili cannot be grown for at least 3 years without being affected by traces in the soil. Samuel knew that sooner or later the plantations would be affected by this illness. Chili, then, was an incidental crop, a transitional product, which offered many the opportunity to make a quick profit, but without providing an alternative to the production/marketing problem.

Subsequently the number of chili cultivators expanded to 42 on the whole settlement, with many farmers financing their own chili. All cultivators received extension help from Samuel, with the exception of Santa Rosa\La Lucha, a sector that was not serviced by him on account of its better soils and cultivation opportunities. Indeed, Samuel claims that he was in search of profitable alternatives for those areas in the settlement with the poorest soils. Furthermore, Samuel adopted a careful attitude

towards credit, providing new chili cultivators with no credit because of the risks incurred by the spread of *malla*.

Later on he continued his search for a stable crop, one which could provide a solution for the long term. In this way *maracuya* (custard apple) was "discovered" by Samuel. Again, it was a suggestion of a settler who told him that in the area of Sarapiquí fairly large plots were being planted. He went to the area to investigate. At the National bank of the village of San Miguel he had a friend who got him a cost projection that had been made for a few producers who were cultivating *maracuya* with bank credit. *Maracuya*, he considered, was more adapted to the Atlantic zone and had the same favourable characteristics as chili in that it provided a regular monthly income.

Relationship with settlers

Samuel, like the other officials, was selective with regard to the people he worked with, although he claimed that he got along with the majority and he had a bad relationship with only two or three. He recounted a nasty experience with a really 'difficult settler' (problematico), Norberto Casas. He described him in the following way,

"There is in El Silencio a farmer called Norberto Casas, who is terrible. He criticizes everything, he gossips with you about other officials and with them he gossips about you. He also spreads stories about his neighbours and then when you visit them you feel uncomfortable. Since he is an older man he thinks he knows everything better than us kids. First I had problems with him because he did not want to follow my recommendations. He even diverted the credit. Once I gave him money to buy inputs and he pocketed it. Then I wrote a really harsh note to him (*bien chiva*) with a copy to the Credit Fund in which I made clear to him that given the fact that he was diverting credit and that he gossiped about me and about other *técnicos* I could not continue assisting him. I had already given him a lot of credit, about 60 thousands. I talk to him only if it is absolutely necessary. I attempt not to have any kind of involvement with him".

In his view, such issues relating to trust relationships between *técnico* and farmer cannot be taken into consideration in programme design, and this makes extension practice much more complex in reality than on paper. Thus, he would argue; "That is the problem with these programmes of technological transfer. You can design a technological package but you cannot change the farmer. How are you going to change the customs of someone who has been tilling the land for 25 years? In the end extension amounts to a matter of personal relationships". And, in these relationships the issue of control was an important one to him.

He thus found it easier to work with new crops, not known to the farmer and which required modern technology. For example in comparing maize with chili he would argue that in the former case settlers have extensive knowledge, whereas in the latter settlers had to listen more to the *técnico*. It then was easier to wield control over the application of a technological package. To that effect trust between him and the farmer was in his view essential to his work. Trust, however, was not merely intuitive but something that could be tested on the farmer. Thus, Samuel before going to the field always reviewed a map with recommendations and notes that he made about the settlers he was going to visit. Trust for him was something that should be validated on the basis of real progress. It was not merely based on friendship or sympathy.

In elaborating upon this theme Samuel commented, "With settlers I usually have

a good relationship. Yet I always keep a distance. That is my nature. It takes time before I trust them. That has nothing to do with the fact that I am a *técnico* and they supposedly peasants. For, neither do I have relationships of friendship with the other *técnicos*. And in talking about them,

"They are colleagues (*companeros*). But to say that they are friends, well I do not know what your concept of friendship is... , to have a friend, I consider, is like having a brother. You must have a lot of *confianza* (confidence). I would say that here I do not have real friends, but there is certainly a feeling of friendship among us.

Establishing a friendship with a settler was problematic in his view, since that could give way to situations which should not occur in a relationship between farmer and *técnico*, like displays of disrespect. Yet, he was clear in arguing that, "In essence it does not matter to me that they are farmers. I have been a farmer myself for a long time. Friendship after all is a personal relationship, it is subjective". These remarks denote very well a contrast between Samuel and the other *técnicos*; the former being used to making displays of friendship with settlers characterized by jokes and not taking things seriously, while Samuel's was more concerned with establishing relations with settlers based on mutual respect and trust.

Once he had a deceptive experience with a settler, whom he had included in the chili programme and whom he considered as one case of a settler who could play an important role as a local leader. The settler diverted the credit to other uses. "Actually", he argued, "I like him as a person, but that does not conceal that I am disillusioned". On the other hand there were settlers he initially did not trust much, but for whom he gained much appreciation in the course of the work. As he put it, "in the course of a relationship you learn things from them and often you have experiences that are not pleasant at all".

Trust as the basis for a working relationship, and for a possible friendship, did not permit in his view unjust or politically-oriented criticism. One experience he had with an UPAGRA leader gives evidence of this. During a visit that a few *técnicos* from an agro-processing company made to Neguev to provide information on non-traditional export crops, one UPAGRA sympathizer started to criticize the IDA. In doing so he started to talk about what he saw as the political function of such production programmes. Samuel recalls this as a very unpleasant experience, especially since it took place in front of an outsider. In his opinion "dirty linen should be washed at home". Another radical leader, on that occasion, congratulated him for his commitment and called him the first *técnico* in the settlement who showed that he was ready to share his knowledge with the peasants. Yet, he continued questioning him for not being able to take an independent stand vis-à-vis the local administration. As this radical settler put it, "Look, Samuel, you have shown that you are not afraid of establishing relationships with peasants and thereby to run risks. Why are you afraid to question the institution's policy of dividing the community? As a child you surely contradicted your mother, didn't you? Well, I think that an institution does not deserve more respect than your own mother".

In effect, Samuel had an ambiguous relationship with UPAGRA leaders. On the one hand he resented that Fernando Campos, the Regional Director, had various times stopped him from working with organized groups which were considered to be close to UPAGRA. Thus, once he was forced to dispose of a truck full of medicinal plants which he was going to deliver to such a group. In addition he had an ongoing relationship with a few leaders who argued that he was neglecting the need to forge strong local

organizations which could defend the producers interests, and that his approach only benefitted the wealthier pro-IDA producers. Samuel, in fact, was very sensitive to these arguments, but he argued strongly against a political approach to the 'organisation' problem. He would then refer to the success of the coffee sector in Costa Rica, achieved through piecemeal but constant efforts at building strong organizations directed to production. At the same time he took the view that a union such as UPAGRA should be given the opportunity to defend the interests of the peasants, but in a peaceful way, in a collaborative spirit. He also regretted that many peasant leaders, with highly developed organizational and rhetorical skills were not involved in the establishment of local organizations.

At the same time he was totally opposed to handling social objectives - relating to community issues - through the local production organization in which he was involved, as some radical leaders suggested. He also regretted that many of these characters preferred to spend their time "smoking marihuana and drinking", instead of working hard on their plots in order to repay their debts.

Samuel's personal projects in relation to the bureaucracy

I went to the field various times with Samuel, usually in his old jeep but a few times - when his car was being repaired - I offered to drive him around.

Samuel was quite open about his view of the institute and about his personal projects. He also liked to reflect on the deceptions and tensions that working with smallholders entailed, on the political underpinnings of administrative life and on his aspiration to be paid in accordance with his professional abilities and dedication. He repeatedly asserted that he had little aspirations to ascend within the institute. A major reason for that was that he did not like office work. In addition he dreaded the kind of political struggles an institute's manager had to become involved in in order to maintain himself in that position. Moreover, he was thinking of becoming independent from the IDA due to the low salaries that were paid in the institute. He was even considering going independent and providing extension to producers on a private basis. He was emphatic that the only incentive he had received was the gratitude of the smallholders. From the administration he had received little recognition. He commented that taking initiatives in an institution provided no rewards, only risks. "If the chili programme had been a failure everyone would have blamed me. And the same holds for the new programmes I am involved in".

Discussion

In contrast to the *agrarista* Samuel was very dependent on his own skills and initiative as a *técnico* to gain the trust of the settlers. As became clear throughout the case study there are contradictions and dangers inherent in the establishing of trust relationships with farmers, as exemplified in the efforts by some to enroll him in their personal projects and by others to involve him in forms of oppositional political activity. In chapter 6 we will see that in order to carry out his work he had to establish coalitions with settlers. At the same time, however, he could not 'go native' and had to continue representing the point of view of the institution. For Samuel, then, the ideology of state intervention and control is not very helpful in pursuing his professional aspirations. Indeed, he has to develop a conception of settlers as individuals with complex life histories and involved in a series of struggles. One thing that makes Samuel particularly interesting is his refusal to become involved in any form of political activity, something which did not help him to advance his career opportunities within the institution.

4.4 The Social Worker and the Political Approach

Mario has been a social worker in the settlement scheme for three years and is an inhabitant of the neighbouring village of Pocora. As we will see, his life-story is closely bound up with that of the Atlantic zone and he is in some ways - but not in others - an exponent of a new generation of blacks who have had access to education and to the political system. His grandfather arrived in the Atlantic zone from Jamaica at the beginning of the century and was engaged as a railway worker. There he met his wife, and after having wandered through many places in the zone, they moved to Pocora in the fifties. Pocora, used to be a black village, at the edge of a settlement area where colonisation - often spontaneously - from the rest of the country has taken place. Its recent growth is mainly due to the influx of migrants attracted by the increased availability of land resulting from a number of land invasions of surrounding haciendas.

Mario claims that his family belongs to the poorest sector of the black population. This is evidenced by the fact that when the government made it possible for them to acquire Costa Rican nationality, they did not see much advantage in it, as they were so poor that they did not expect to apply for bank credit or carry out any financial transactions. Nor did they learn Spanish as they did not see the point.

Mario's father earned a living as a tractor driver on the neighbouring Bremen hacienda. They complemented their income with cocoa and fruit grown on some 5 hectares of land his grandparents had inherited from the United Fruit Company. In contrast to his parents, who had almost no formal education, Mario attended secondary school and entered university. He would comment: "I belong to a very special generation. I am the first in my family who is not dependent on agricultural activities or migration for making a living".

One experience that may have influenced his views on the region was his friendship with one of the sons of the owner of the neighbouring Bremen hacienda. Both are of the same age and have known each other since the young Rojas began to help his father at Bremen. In their youth they used to roam around together. Later, when Federico began to combine his escapades in the area (with pretty girls) with drinking, Mario backed out, as he cannot have liquor (nor does he smoke). Nevertheless, the young Rojas remained quite attached to him and offered him a job whenever he needed one. Later, however, when Mario became involved in the invasion of one of their haciendas the Rojas lost trust in him. Still they used to have a friendship.

Mario recalls that he became conscious of the regional socio-economic problems while attending secondary school in the larger neighbouring village of Siquirres. The secondary school was led by a charismatic priest who encouraged social discussion at school. Mario became a well-known member of the school council. He also entered a sort of debating club in which solutions were sought for the most pressing social problems of the moment. He remembers that he became involved in the writing of a document addressing the agrarian question in the Atlantic zone called, 'tenure and productivity'. The pamphlet argued that the government should take care of distributing land in an organized way, not under the pressure of unions supported by political forces. A case was made for a taxation system and for the confiscation of land that was not used in a productive way. Their goal was to achieve a land-reform which would not affect agricultural productivity negatively.

While attending school he used to help his father and worked on various neighbouring plantations at the weekends and in the holidays. He recalled "although I

was a highschool student I never lost contact with the land. I was a peasant who went to school". In those days the village was growing due to the establishment of banana plantations in two neighbouring haciendas (Bremen and Las Mercedes), a situation which led to an increase in labour union militancy. This was reflected in Mario's life, for while attending highschool he became involved in a widespread land invasion movement that started in the second half of the seventies. Two reasons can be singled out for these invasions. First, access to land was becoming difficult for locals as sharecropping agreements on the haciendas were being curtailed. Second, the expansion of the regional economy attracted many outsiders in search of land.

Mario did well at school and for that reason was awarded a scholarship by the World Bank. After high school he went to university to study agronomy. He was already known as a good speaker and a sociable person. With regard to the choice of career he says, "many people were surprised that I chose agronomy as a career. They tried to convince me to study law as this is a profession with good monetary prospects. I responded that they may be right that lawyers earn more but agronomists produce more. I am a peasant's son of the Atlantic zone, I like agriculture and I think that as an agronomist I can achieve more than as a lawyer".

It was as a student that he became involved in party politics. Shortly after entering university he had joined the *Liberación* party. He recalls that this decision was not really well thought out, and actually he could have joined the other large party, *Unidad*, or even one of the leftist parties. Henceforth he became active in a number of organizations in Pocora, such as the local development association and the local party branch. In university he was elected to various posts in the Student Association and the University Council of which he became president in 1982. He considers that was a very fruitful time, for "I belonged to a batch of young and dynamic leaders who fought for the rights of poor students for cheap housing, scholarships, etc. Maybe we were not experienced, but we were not corrupt like many others, and we made a lot of proposals. In those times we held a dialogue with rightists and leftists and sought to define principled positions with regard to major problems. We did not eschew conflicts and were more than once persecuted by the teachers organization. There was a lot of corruption among them and they needed the help of the students to maintain their positions. We began to question the way they got scholarships and distributed them, their use of university resources, etc".

Meanwhile his family situation changed. He married the daughter of a former manager of the Mercedes plantation and the local representative of *Liberación*. He has five children so far. His marriage, however, has not been without problems. His problems revolve around his wife's life-style. As he claims, "she is accustomed to socialize with wealthy people, thus she likes to pretend we are wealthier than we really are. She likes attending expensive restaurants with her friends. Though she is a teacher and earns more than I do, she expects me to bear the weight of the family expenses".

Mario is well-known in his village for his integrity. As a colleague explained it, "he is so damned political that he cares nothing for money. You see him with holes in his T-shirts, neither does he drink nor is he a womanizer. His only vice is politics'. Mario has distinct views on politics. He has contempt for those who hope to progress economically through politics, for all those opportunists who think that the party will render them well-paid jobs. On the other hand, he understands why some politicians feel forced to amass a fortune, by definition in an illegal way, in order to consolidate their political power. With regard to this particular issue, he has been thinking about a system in which politicians are made managers of state enterprises, such as banana plantations, that would give them an economic base enhancing their independence from

the country's financial elites. He has put this proposal to the party. In effect, Mario has come to the conclusion that the only way to resolve his financial problems is to become an agricultural entrepreneur. He grows one hectare of export pineapple, an enterprise that looks highly promising. To that effect he shares all his time between his work, his political activities and his pineapple plantation. In short, his obsession is the attainment of sufficient economic autonomy to ensure the well-being of his family and to enable him to participate in politics. This autonomy implies not owing anything to a political patron, neither being forced to act in a particular way in order to comply with the demands of an employer. This is one reason why he is not happy working for the IDA. In relation to this he comments, "

"I have been offered many posts in local government, yet I have never been interested in them. Politicians expect to pay off their debts in this way. I am not interested in money but in ideas. In Pocora and in Limon they may say that I am a bad politician but no one can say that I am an opportunist. My political capital consists of my reputation as someone who cannot be bought".

The job: recruitment and functions

Mario's recruitment for the O34 Programme happened because of his good political connections and because he again needed a job since his term as President of the Student Association had concluded. The job was offered just at the right moment. The job was offered by Don Roberto Arcos, who was then manager of the O34 Programme. "We met at a congress of the party's youth" he related. "He approached me and said he needed dependable people for the O34 Programme with a good knowledge of the local situation and asked whether I would be available". At the time he was working on the Macadamia estate of the Rojas family. The work was not ill-paid but it entailed a lot of responsibility. His intention was to get a job which gave him the opportunity to continue his studies. Thus, he decided to call Roberto Arcos and remind him of his offer. He said he would talk to the Head of the Regional Office and then he again interviewed him. On that occasion he was told that he had asked for information about him from the national Institute of Alcoholism and Drugs (IAD), where he had worked for a few years. He was told that they had thought him to be a valuable element, effective in his work and capable of handling conflict situations under difficult circumstances. The only thing he was criticized for was not writing reports. "He was not far off the mark. I really enjoyed that work" said Mario. The IAD operated with a minimum of resources. There was no transport and they would only occasionally receive daily allowances. They would travel to a community and the villagers would look after them. He had the opportunity to establish excellent relationships and really liked the work. He thought that the Programme Manager liked the idea of employing someone with the right local connections in an area permeated by powerful leftist organizations and who, in addition, could work with few resources. Thus he got the job. He said he saw it as a challenge, thinking that it would be similar to work with the IAD.

In that period a sociologist was working in the Regional Office and Mario became his assistant. A division of labour evolved between them in which the sociologist would assist the Head of the Settlement on organizational issues and Mario would deal with daily problems. After some time the sociologist was transferred to another settlement because of a 'skirt' problem, (*problema de faldas*). He made a settler's daughter pregnant and did not want to recognize the child as he was going to marry another woman. One of his tasks in the settlement had been trying to set up a cooperative. He had not been particularly successful, because of what were, in his view, problems with the plantation mentality of the settlers. He made a clear distinction between

organization and promotion functions. According to him his major function was to establish policy guidelines for the productive development of the settlement, not to motivate settlers. Promotion or consciousness-raising tasks were practical issues, he said, which did not require the specialized knowledge of a sociologist.

Cooperative organization was, according to the sociologist's model, to take place via established channels. It was his task to connect the settlers with the various agencies comprising the cooperative movement and to evaluate their progress. Of course Mario's task was to be the consciousness-raising one. The relationship between the two was not always without strains. Mario resented the sociologist's arrogance and aloofness towards the settlers. Many of them were old acquaintances and their situation seemed quite familiar to him. In contrast, the sociologist held a view of settlers as ex-banana workers with little decision-making capacity. Moreover Mario disliked the sociologist's irresponsible behaviour with regard to the settler's daughter. "How can we judge the settlers' actions", he exclaimed, "when we do things like this. Do we then have any moral authority to guide them"? He saw the sociologist as a political opportunist since he used to carry membership cards during the presidential campaign of the two major parties. His aspiration was to take over as Head of the Department of Organization and Training if the opposition party won the elections, and all departmental heads would be replaced.

"Actually we did little more than drive around in the car", he complained. "Sometimes we would visit friendly settlers. They would serve us food and treat us well. One of those friendly settlers was the father of the girl my companion made pregnant. We visited him not only because he received us well but because he had two very pretty daughters. In a way I feel sorry for what happened"⁵. Mario's attitude to him is typical of his relations with others whom he considered opportunists. The sociologist was always on friendly terms with his superiors. He would readily defend the institution's interests. When Mario met him somewhere he would greet him but not stop to talk to him. If he asked him to have a drink with him, he claimed he would say "later, later", for he really did not want to waste time with that sort of person. If he needed help, Mario would give it, but did not seek friendly relations with him. Nonetheless, the reason Mario was given the job was that the sociologist did not have the practical experience for handling day-to-day affairs.

Mario was sometimes asked to carry out 'special' jobs. One such job was the 'normalization' of relations between a nearby settlement and the IDA. This settlement had been established by invasion at the beginning of the seventies. The IDA had located an office there which became well-known for the head's authoritarianism and corruption. Consequently, a situation emerged in which the settlers would not permit the entry of IDA functionaries. The situation was so conflictive that there was even evidence of the existence of a guerrilla cell. Mario was asked to establish contact with the settlers' organizations. Recalling this experience he says,

"Nobody in the institution would do this job. They did not dare. For me it was a challenge. I invited the members of the settlement's committee for a meeting. They declared me to be a fool. One said I should be hanged, not so much for being an IDA functionary, but for being so stupid as to go to talk to them alone. In the first meeting they abused me and the institution for hours, for the neglect they had

⁵The situation of course was more complicated and the settler was criticized by others for having provided the sociologist with the opportunity to get intimate with his daughter. Apparently he expected that the sociologist would marry her eventually.

been subjected to, the promises that had not been fulfilled, the practices of the former head, etc. I chose to be silent. When they asked me why I did not defend the institution I answered that I did not know about the events that had taken place there and that I would rather wait until they told their story before I took a stand. This tactic helped, for ultimately they grew tired. Their aggressiveness towards me subsided. They began to pity me for working for such a miserable outfit. I returned a few times and had conversations with the leaders who seemed most moderate. I knew many of them. I did not defend the IDA. I told them my objective was to serve as a channel of communication in order to enable them to benefit from new programmes if they chose to. In this way I helped to normalize the relationship between the IDA and the settlement. I was highly regarded for it".

Mario received a letter of congratulations from the regional director, and the Head of the Training and Organisation department of the IDA (DOCAE) asked the personnel department to give him a living allowance, something which was conferred only on functionaries who had been transferred from other areas. They allowed him to change his address to Guácimo to fix that. He told me that in those times he was regarded as the big man, "the fixer", he said. Subsequently, Mario specialized in jobs like ensuring that leftist elements were not elected to committees, etc. He became a trusted person, responsible for 'delicate tasks'.

A bureaucratic social drama

Mario's relationship to his superiors suddenly changed in a negative way when he got involved in a political struggle. The events took place shortly after the presidential elections. He had been working hard for a promising but relatively unknown candidate for the *Liberación* party, Oscar Arias. Arias was an outsider in the party's top echelons. He got there as head of the party's youth section to which Mario also belonged. Arias also depended on a generation of young and dynamic leaders, most of them coming from the party's youth. Mario did a lot of campaigning for him in Pocora. Mario had also been able to convince a former colleague of his, Rolando, to campaign for Arias.

As we saw in Chapter 2, after Arias surprisingly won, a fight for the position of General Manager of the IDA between Chávez and Arcos ensued. Arcos obtained the position thanks to his connection with the O34 Programme and the support of the USAID consultant. Arcos intended to improve management through a decentralization scheme, which entailed giving more power to the regions. Accordingly, he forced through the establishment of the position of Regional Director. As expected, he chose as the candidate for Regional Director of the Atlantic zone one of his supporters, Fernando Campos; who at the time was the Head of the Neguev Settlement. We also saw in Chapter 2 that an alliance had been forged between Roberto Arcos and the Settlement Heads of the O34 Programme.

Chávez, still in rivalry to Arcos, decided to strike at Arcos' base of support and started to plot to get his own man into the Regional Directors' post.⁶ Chávez supported Rolando, who had a long experience in the Atlantic zone, using the argument that since his candidate had supported the party, and thus the election of Arias as President, he should be rewarded with the position. At the same time a campaign started, to discredit Fernando on the argument that he was not even a *Liberacionista*, but a supporter of the opposition party *Unidad*. Accordingly an open letter was sent with signatures of a majority of the frontline workers to the Executive President of the IDA and *Liberación* politicians. Mario, for the same political reasons, and because they

⁶See chapter 2 on the wider significance of this institutional struggle.

had worked together for President Arias campaign, supported Rolando. This support got him into trouble with the General Manager, Roberto Arcos, and his local boss Fernando Campos.

Suffering 'political persecution'

The relationship between Mario and Fernando grew sour after the attempted 'coup' to oust him. Fernando resented Mario's involvement since he had been the only native functionary to have supported it. In fact, Fernando thought that Mario had been behind the whole conspiracy and that he was the instigator of the letter. However, the whole history was more complicated. The manoeuvre had been well-planned. As Mario recalls.

"I was invited to a meeting at the house of a local politician. Jesús Chávez himself was there and a few extensionists. There was really good food and lots of booze. We started to plot for Rolando. When they started to get drunk they began to divide amongst them the most important positions in the Atlantic zone. One extensionist would become head of the extensionist unit, another head of another settlement, a local politician head of the Neguev settlement, etc. I would become Head of La Lucha, which is a sector within Neguev. I spent a pleasant time, though I do not drink, observing all the people getting drunk and talking bullshit".

Once I asked him why he took part in this coup. Mario answered,

"It was not ambition, for I honestly did not believe that we had a great chance to win the fight. I was experienced enough to know that political action by functionaries against a superior could not have much success, and it was clear to me that Jesús Chávez had lost the game". And after reflecting some time he continued, "the truth is that I participated because I considered that Rolando deserved the job, as he had been a dedicated campaign-worker, in contrast to Fernando. It was a political choice, and I consider that in politics it is more important to loose a battle after a heavy fight than to avoid it".

However, the consequences were highly negative for him. One of the *técnicos* of the Neguev office who supported Fernando told him about the letter. Fernando, in turn, informed Roberto Arcos who called Mario by radio. Mario recalls, "he said to me that he would consider every action against Fernando an attack against himself, and that he would annihilate everyone in Neguev who was causing trouble".

This was an important setback for Mario. His party had won the elections and he had been a committed local supporter of the new president. Nonetheless, he had got into trouble with an influential politician like Roberto Arcos. Thereafter he experienced a period that he characterizes as 'political persecution'. His regional allowance was withdrawn - a considerable financial loss, half his monthly salary. He was no longer allowed to use a vehicle. "I had to do everything myself", he says. "In a few months I lost weight, several pounds. Sometimes it was humiliating, to see the others driving around in the cars while I sweated on the road". One consequence, though, was that his relationship with settlers improved remarkably. They liked a functionary who walked in and out of their farmsteads instead of driving.

Some time later another incident took place. The Executive President of the IDA phoned the Regional Office ordering Mario and another extensionist working in the settlement to present themselves as soon as possible at headquarter's. Mario thought his luck had changed, that he was going to get a promotion. He travelled to San José in the company of functionaries from another settlement. When they heard he was going

to have an interview with the Executive President they asked not to be forgotten if he got an important position.

However, when he met the Executive President his joy rapidly disappeared. He accused them of creating dissent in the regional office and Mario, in particular, of organizing invasions in the region, producing a newspaper clipping in which two IDA functionaries were accused of fomenting invasions. He feared for his job. Luckily some people spoke later on his behalf. One of them was Pennycot, a well-known peasant leader active in land invasions. Fernando had asked him whether Mario had been involved in the invasion of a large adjacent hacienda. Pennycot denied it. Mario thought this, in effect, saved him, though he did not know why. According to him Pennycot had absolutely no reason to do so.

Relationship with settlers: the client-official interface

Mario's relationship with settlers was characterized by the following statement, "I am always careful not to be unjust to anyone, since in fact I am a peasant like them. If I lost my job as an IDA functionary, I would not like people to say that I took advantage of my position as a bureaucrat. I will probably need their help later". Mario was always amiable to settlers, and always ready to meet a request. Yet, he was not considered a good functionary by settlers, for he simply did not fulfill his obligations towards producer's organizations. He was expected to assist them in various ways: in their internal organization and in intermediation with other institutions. Yet, he had no specified work programme in relation to the settler's associations. In effect, his operational style could best be described as rather ad-hoc, without specific targets.

This situation was not due to lack of interest in his job, but with a particular way of dealing with the contradictory and conflictive character of state intervention. The O34 Programme had led to a pattern of heavy dependence by the settlers on the IDA and this had led to most functionaries seeing settlers as dependent, atomist, conflictive and in search of vertical asymmetrical relationships with powerful parties. Mario, who felt socially much closer to the settlers in Neguev than to the other officials could not take such a rigid view. Indeed, his involvement in the 'local' world of the settlers sometimes led to his becoming entangled in conflicts which had much to do with the history of IDA intervention in Neguev.

Next, a telling incident will be discussed which illustrates such conflict.

Conflictive client-official interfaces

In February of 1988, a number of abandoned plots were invaded by sons of settlers and day labourers. Before taking action, the invaders had attempted to secure the support of the community and in particular of a radical leader, Porfirio, who was known to be involved with UPAGRA and who had a prominent reputation for his militancy and fighting qualities. After the IDA intervened in this settlement a tiresome stalemate ensued between radical settlers and the IDA.

One of the plots occupied belonged to a nephew of Nicolas, a well-known member of the pro-IDA association of small producers. In fact, Nicolas had always actively cultivated a good relationship with the Settlement Head, especially by taking a strong stand against radicals such as Porfirio. On this particular day I accompanied Mario to one of the sectors of Neguev with the highest support for UPAGRA, Bellavista. On arriving at the community center in order to stick a few posters on the wall we met with some settlers. Mario, as usual greeted them with much joviality. He started inquiring whether the plots were still occupied after the police visit. At a certain moment he said, "Nicolas is saying that Porfirio is organizing invasions within the

settlement". One of the settlers, an old staunch UPAGRA supporter then exclaimed, "Well, I will tell Porfirio what Nicolas is saying. He has already been warned not to tell lies about him and the union. You will see, Porfirio will give him a sound thrashing. Moreover, (and this he said in order to scare Mario), I will tell him that you are spreading around Nicolas' accusations. I saw Mario growing unsettled. "Well", he smiled, "those were not the words that Nicolas used. Actually, I was just joking and I guess Nicolas was not entirely serious either. The old settler responded with a laugh, yet with a malicious tone: "No, Mario, you are wrong, functionaries should always be serious about what they say. After all you are paid for that, aren't you? The other settlers joined in what became a joyful exercise of functionary teasing. Mario tried to swallow his worries and started to joke with the settlers. Later, in the car he said to me, "I am in trouble now. Porfirio will use this politically and say that I am concerting a campaign against UPAGRA". Then I suggested to him that we go to Porfirio and explain the situation. Mario agreed immediately.

Porfirio invited us in, showing his usual hospitality. "Mario, what a surprise to receive a visit from you, that is not very common, is it?", he exclaimed, not without a sting of mockery. We sat down, and after an introductory chat on current issues he said to us, "Well, I imagine that you have not only come to share a pleasant moment". Then I told him that there were rumours about his involvement in the invasions and that we were interested to hear the truth from the source. I also told him about the 'incident'. First he reacted angrily towards the pro-IDA settler, Nicolas. "Now the time has come that I should teach him a lesson for a liar and traitor of his class". Then he explained that it had been UPAGRA's position all the way not to become involved in invasions unless they were based on a clear programme concerning organization and production.

"That means that if we, as an organization, support invasions we do it openly and that we will seek negotiations with the government aimed at finding solutions to the peasants' problems, not only with respect to access to land, but also with regard to credit and extension. However, in this particular case I am a community member and I thought it was important to show my solidarity with some of the invaders".

And he enlarged upon his comment;

"Take the case of Juancito, I have known him since he was a child. He is a hard-working lad and has a wife and children. He needs the land. The parcel he occupied is owned by an investor from San José, a speculator who only has a few cows on the plot, on what is fine land for agriculture. This boy came to me to ask for advise. I said to him that the help I could render him was the same as that of other community members. That the responsibility was his but that he could only maintain himself on the land with the moral and material support of the community. Yesterday I helped him to build his shack.

"By the way", he inquired, "is he still there? I hope so for him". He continued, "What is your opinion on these issues, of the relationship between the institution you work for and the peasants. You are so quiet Mario, I am curious to know what your point of view is. After all I do not have every day a chance to discuss these issues with a functionary". At that instance he began to recall sourly how the IDA had done everything to blacken them, to marginalize them, during and after the invasion. In the meantime Mario held his eyes closed, his hands crossed like he was preaching. When Porfirio finished he waited a few seconds and commented,

"I consider that some of us do not function satisfactorily. Not all of us are as motivated as we should be. I agree with you that the relationship between settlers and the institution could be improved considerably. We need to generate mechanisms to find solutions for a number of problems concerning the production conditions of the settlers. This is a position on which some of my superiors probably do not agree, but I maintain it here and if necessary would do so in front of the Executive President of the IDA. I do not know whether you are right or not to blame the IDA for the problems you have been listing. I am relatively new in the institution so I was not present when all these events you mentioned took place. However, I should stress that since I chose to be a functionary of the IDA, I have the moral obligation to defend the principles and objectives of the institution".

The peasant leader was rather pleased with this answer, as he argued that it was at least honest.

Mario's relationship with settlers, however, was not always so careful as with this particular peasant leader. In fact, he enjoyed talking to them and is very candid when he talks about his personal situation, his problems with his superiors and above all the struggle for getting back his regional allowance. I was often amazed about his openness on these issues. As he once told a leader of the association on a visit,

"I know I have been a bad promotor, that you have every reason to be angry with me. I hope that when I solve my conflict with the institution over the regional allowance I will have more time to spend on you. This has become a matter of principle. A week ago I had an interview with an Assistant to the President and I told him plainly that I am suffering political persecution by the General Manager of the IDA, Roberto Arcos".

On the other hand he knew how to make settlers laugh. He liked to present himself as a peasant and enjoyed telling about life in the region in the past. No one had a grudge against him. Many considered him as inefficient, even ignorant, but nobody said he was arrogant or authoritarian. At any rate he was accessible.

Relationship with colleagues: the administrative domain

Amiability also characterized his relationship with his colleagues. They liked him for his good humour and his jokes. He kept good relations with both factions into which the regional office was divided. He also took care to act as a good colleague. One consequence of this was that on several occasions he faced conflicts with his superiors for lending out his motor bike. However, this amiability is not entirely disinterested. He would take mornings or afternoons off to work on his pineapple plot. He knew he needed the good-will of his colleagues and immediate superiors to maintain this freedom. That meant that he must be ready to do special jobs during weekends and holidays.

With regard to his work situation Mario would complain that no discussion in the administrative domain was possible. Addressing the he would argue,

"If I talked with my colleagues about the issues we discuss they would accuse me of introducing politics into the office. I already have a reputation of being too independent. It could even be dangerous if someone became enthusiastic about some of the issues I would like to propose. If a Fernando supporter should hear this I might be accused of trying to take his position. Fernando himself would certainly take this view. I used to talk with Y about regional issues and he seemed interested, but I have stopped doing so".

Accordingly he adopted a rather critical attitude towards his colleagues, and in doing so he likes to reflect on their moral character, on their political involvement and on their dependence upon illegal economic sources. As we have seen above, Mario has a strong wish to improve his economic situation and he holds to the view that the institutional system should offer the officials enough opportunities so that they do not have to resort to forms of corruption. Thus he would adopt an ambiguous, though critical, position towards the *agraristas*, whom he suspected of accepting bribes. On the one hand he argued that it was quite natural for them to take advantage of this opportunity to earn something extra, on the other hand that it would be more dignified for them to engage in some independent commercial or agricultural enterprise, as he himself did. Interestingly, he would address this issue in a series of discussions he had with one MP from Limon, suggesting that functionaries should be given the opportunity to start their own enterprises - if possibly cooperative ones - so that their economic needs would not come into contradiction with the service delivery ethos.

He was not less critical of those who used politics to improve their standing in the institution. For, in his view this was an opportunistic stand that betrayed a lack of 'principles'. He could be quite scathing about those who would measure their actions with a view to pleasing their patrons. In effect, he would be very critical of his fellow colleagues in other settlements for not being able to confront difficult situations without calculating the possible consequences for their institutional careers. It was precisely this lack of political independence which, in his view, led to an image of the functionary as irresponsible and disinterested on the part of the settler.

But his attitude towards the institution was somewhat ambiguous. Thus he would comment,

"I agree with most of the objectives of the IDA, and I think that the institution plays an important function. However, I do not think that there are chances within the institution for me to develop myself. When I have to spend weekends walking kilometres while other functionaries refuse to go there because the four-wheel drive car jumps too much, I become quite demotivated. If I go, I do it for the settler, but actually it makes no difference to them. It would be quite different if they were my employers and I were compelled to give accounts to them. Besides, why should I undertake all sorts of ethically doubtful jobs for the miserable salary they pay me. No, I am a simple functionary and I should behave like one".

And he would give the following example of the sort of moral stance he had towards settlers.

"Some time ago the wife of a settler said to me that all functionaries were thieves. I am no thief, what could I steal? I agree with her in that I steal time from the institution. But no one cares. Time seems to be no scarce resource at the IDA. My actual priorities are my family, the pineapple enterprise and getting back my regional allowance".

4.5 Concluding Remarks: Policy Internalization and the Creation of Autonomy

As we have seen in the case studies, front-line workers have to deal with conflicting demands coming from both clients and the administrative environment. In contrast with desk-level functionaries - who operate exclusively within an administrative domain or who are able to enforce a clear separation between administrative and service delivery tasks - front-line workers have to handle problematic situations in the field, in a context of highly personalized expectations. The ensuing tension is manifested by the fact that they are seen as representatives of a legitimate authority (in the case of the IDA, a state agency pursuing the welfare of its beneficiaries through the provision of land and other necessary conditions for becoming a successful farmer) while at the same time being confronted with a series of power struggles and social contradictions which constitute the everyday reality of service delivery.

In contrast to views of front-line workers as alienated characters, it becomes apparent through the case studies that they, like other people, are not cynical characters who say things they do not believe in and do things they know are wrong. Neither do they lack the ability to differentiate between the ideals they purportedly are striving for and the much less ideal practices they become engaged in. At the same time, the argument that front-line workers adopt pragmatic attitudes appears to be too general, for, as the case studies show, they might adopt differential attitudes towards beneficiaries, on the basis of the various demands and pressures they are subject to (de Vries, forthcoming).

The three officials had in common a large - but in the case of the *agrarista* a dwindling - motivation to relate to settlers. Indeed, Mario, the social worker had the tendency to 'go native', whereas the extensionist, Samuel, assumed a position towards his beneficiaries which was described by many (both settlers and functionaries) as paternalistic - but not clientelistic -, and the *agrarista* made efforts to deal with them in a just and impartial way before he decided to opt for a greater distance. The social worker recurrently became entangled in political struggles involving radical settlers, loyal settlers and bureaucrats. As a result, he was not able to exercise much institutional authority. This, however, was in accordance with his attempts to distance himself from the authoritarian attitude of his superiors while maintaining good relationships with people in the locality. The extensionist, in turn, had to take much care to distance himself from radical settlers who attempted to use the problems that arose in the implementation of the programmes for political purposes. At the same time he had difficulties in maintaining relationships of trust with "loyal" settlers without having to engage in paternalistic practices which, in his view, reduced the organisational capacity of the producer's organisation. (In Chapter 6 we will see how this tension led to a rupture between him and the traditional leaders).

Both the extensionist (Samuel) and the social worker (Mario) were able to develop a degree of autonomy towards the institution. However, the reasons for doing so and the strategies they followed were different. The extensionist in his wariness of political involvement and institutional intrigues spent all his energy on his work. His institutional network consisted of a few friendship with people, whom he trusted for their professionalism. He certainly did not engage in patron-client relationships which could be utilized politically. The social worker, in contrast, in his commitment to politics would not make a neat distinction between political and bureaucratic decisions. This, however, was not without costs as he became the object of marginalisation. Yet, he

was able to exploit the events for the purpose of accumulating political capital as an independent politician. At the same time he knew that he was the only person with the capacity to undertake certain, "delicate" tasks, a knowledge which enabled him to concentrate on his other, more personal, endeavours.

Both functionaries had high expectations for the future with regard to their involvement in non-bureaucratic commercial enterprises (Mario with his pineapple plot, Samuel as a member of a guava cooperative). In fact, they saw this as a possible avenue for becoming financially independent from the bureaucracy. Engagement in such activities, however, was in the case of Samuel directed to continuing his involvement with small-scale agriculture, whereas in the case of Mario the motivation was that of creating the necessary financial independence for furthering his political activities.

From the foregoing we can conclude that these front-line workers handled their involvement in political, institutional, local and economic networks in such a way as to develop operational styles which enabled them to establish a space for manoeuvre, that is to enhance their power of discretion in their dealings with settlers. In making the distinction between the different social pressures officials were confronted with - those in the implementation and the locality contexts - it could be argued that the social worker was interested in cultivating relationships oriented to 'locality', whereas the *técnico* concentrated on the tasks of service delivery. The administrative process was a reality which they certainly had to deal with, yet, they were able to adopt a certain autonomy.

This was different in the case of Moisés, the *agrarista*, who from the beginning adopted the administrative perspective. He did this thanks to his capacity and willingness to internalize what I earlier called the ideology of state intervention, so much so that he came to identify himself in large measure with the 'state project'. An operational style based on such a strategic option, however, is not an evident, or unproblematic choice. As we saw in the case of Moisés it implied that he had to accept a number of 'facts' about the administrative reality which did not correspond to his initial aspirations and social outlook, and modify his operational style in accordance with the administrative imperatives of exercising social control.

It must be emphasized that such a strategy is not an easy one. It certainly implies more than adopting a 'bureaucratic' rubber stamp attitude. For taking up the administrative perspective entails processing a set of contradictory experiences in such a way that they may conform with an ideology which holds to the right and even the obligation of the state to intervene in, and if necessary shape, the livelihoods of people. Holding to such an ideology entails that the legitimacy of the state never be questioned, and much less negotiated (as the social worker was quite ready to do).

We can conclude then that the way in which the ideology of state intervention is internalized is not at all a self-evident, mechanical process. In effect, such process is fraught by all sorts of practical and moral problems, as front-line workers recurrently have to face the contradictions inherent to state intervention itself. These contradictions (i.e. social justice vs. social control, the client as a case vs. the client as a complex individual) must be tackled differently in the administrative domain from the field domain. In addition the functionary carries a heavy cognitive load deriving from his involvement in local socio-political networks.

It will be argued in the next chapter that this is a more complex view than those held by authors such as Grindle (1980) and Lipsky (1980) who tend to view implementors' strategies in terms of ways for coping with the (structural) constraints to the implementation of state policy. In effect, some front-line workers become very

good in representing the state, whereas others may be inclined to side with beneficiaries in subverting the authority of the state. The point then is that not only the goals of state policy are transformed in the process of implementation, but also the meaning of state intervention. The result is that the ideology of intervention comes to mean different means to different front-line workers in different implementation contexts.

CHAPTER 5

A THEORETICAL INTERLUDE

5.1 Introduction

It is expedient now to summarize the argument, so far. In Chapter 2 an analysis of the IDA and the O34 Programme was presented which focussed on competition between institutional projects representing different views of how the IDA should confront landlessness, rural conflict and colonization. It was argued that an advantage of an approach centering on competition between institutional projects is that it enables us to develop an understanding of institutions which takes account of their conflictive historical evolution as against approaches which view institutions as homogenous components of a state apparatus.

Chapter 3 focussed on front-line workers and administrators. The analysis centred on how front-line workers sustain an ideology of intervention which was aimed to eradicate politics from the implementation process through the employment of techniques of individualization. The delivery of credit and extension to individuals corresponded with an implementation model in which the beneficiary was viewed as an individual client who in return for specific services and goods, should comply to the institutional objective of transforming them into entrepreneurial farmer. In this way it was hoped to transform patterns of client-institution relations that were based upon sets of political transactions between the institution and groups of settlers into a more effective type of relationship between beneficiaries and the IDA. In making a distinction between the administrative domain, where this model of the 'client' was predominant, and the field domain where social interaction between front-line workers and farmers takes a personalized character it was possible to show the contradictions of this intervention ideology. Whereas in the administrative domain labelling plays an important role, in the field legitimization practices become central to front-line workers' dealings with beneficiaries.

Chapter 4 analysed three contrasting styles of operation developed by front-line workers. It was argued there that front-line workers not only have to cope with the contradictions of implementation but that they also have to come to terms with varying sets of pressures and demands, which have to do with issues of 'locality'. It was also shown that front-line workers, in constructing operational styles, internalize these sets of pressures and demands in differing ways.

However, so far the analysis has remained centred on institutional life and intervention practices. Little attention has yet been paid to the strategic ways in which

state-subjects deal with state intervention: i.e. to intervention-coping. This requires that we develop additional concepts that enable us to study how farmers/beneficiaries develop modes of action based upon their previous experiences with state bureaucracies. The thrust of the argument is that in order to analyse how farmers appropriate state intervention it is necessary to develop a notion of discursive strategy. I will briefly lay out the rationale for a discourse-oriented perspective by pinpointing some basic differences between the world-views of front-line workers and those of farmers/beneficiaries.

A rationale for centering on intervention-coping strategies

Bureaucrats, such as implementors, share a bureaucratic world-view which differs in important ways from that of the populations they attempt to target and service. Or, in other words, they defend the perspective of the state and its idiom of authority. In contrast, farmers in the Atlantic zone are not constrained by one and the same world-view. Thus in the coming chapters we will encounter settlers with differing attitudes to life and farming: some with an entrepreneurial outlook, others exhibiting the individualist attitude of a frontier world-view, and others holding to radical and collectivist views.

In the case of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica three major types of discursive practice can be defined which play a role in local struggles on how to organise the relationship with state agencies: those of community, of democracy and of agricultural modernization. We will see in the coming chapters that certain settlers are highly skilled in adapting such discursive practices to the dynamics of the local situation. The point, then, is that such types of discursive practice come to mean different things to different people in different types of encounters and local settings. This, I think, is different from the world of bureaucrats, where the intervention ideology - though weak and unconvincing it may be in particular settings - remains a constant in bureaucratic encounters.

It is my argument that these types of discursive practice are appropriated by settlers, and that in the process particular intervention-coping strategies are constructed for dealing with state institutions. These strategies are the outcome of a series of local struggles and conflicts over how to deal with the state bureaucracy, in which various - often competing - groups of farmers are involved. In these struggles, there exist particular arguments, themes or discursive practices; and it is precisely through their articulation and deployment in particular arenas that intervention-coping strategies are shaped. Yet it must be emphasized that such intervention-coping strategies come about within specific local and historical contexts. Strategies, then, cannot be inferred from the assumed interests of farmers, nor can they be constructed on the basis of general or a-historical theories (e.g. Chayanovian ideas of peasant economy). Instead, I argue that they can only be studied by analysing how social actors develop local and interest-specific strategic 'languages' (or discursive strategies) for dealing with the authority of the state.

Organisation of the chapter

This chapter is meant as a theoretical interlude and its aim is twofold. First, a number of concepts that were introduced in previous chapters will be placed within a wider theoretical discussion. Such a discussion has been avoided so far. Yet, it must be stressed that underlying concepts such as 'intervention ideology' and 'social interfaces' are important theoretical debates concerning the 'role of the state' and 'local bureaucracy' in planned intervention, the nature of implementation in service delivery and Third World contexts, the relationship between policy discourse and labelling, etc.

The second aim of this chapter is to form a bridge between an approach centred on bureaucrats' operational 'styles' and another which focuses on settlers' intervention-coping 'strategies'.

The chapter is organised as follows: First, I discuss Grindle's institutional approach to the state in order to assess the usefulness of the concept of development ideology for understanding state intervention. Second, two theories of implementation are examined: Grindle's discussion of implementation in the Third World and Lipsky's analysis of implementation in service delivery bureaucracies. The conclusion will be that implementation cannot be studied without taking into account the ways in which different sets of social actors adapt and transform the ideologies of intervention. Third, a few interpretive approaches to the relationship between the bureaucracy and its clients are critically reviewed: Handelman's interface approach focusing on bureaucratic world-views and Long's interfaces approach concentrating on structural discontinuities. The purpose of this discussion is to appraise the usefulness of such approaches for understanding the strategies clients/beneficiaries develop to gain access to state resources. Four, a critical approach to the relationship between the bureaucracy and beneficiaries from the perspective of public administration will be discussed: the work on the organisation of access and eligibility as developed by Bernard Shaffer and his co-workers. Four, a critical review will be presented of approaches to development administration which focus on labelling as an element of administrative practices. This will be followed by a discussion of Apthorpe's work on the deconstruction of policy languages. By then the path will be cleared for the elaboration of a theoretical framework for the analysis of intervention-coping strategies with special emphasis on discursive practice.¹

5.2 An Institutional Approach to the State

In examining the institutional context in which state policy is designed and executed Grindle (1977) focuses on relations of loyalty between officials belonging to rings (*argollas*) based on similarities in generation, education, social or regional origins, etc. These *argollas* are differentiated in composition and hierarchical in structure, claiming loyalty to a *caudillo* type state-leader. In addition they are subject to restructuring on the occasion of changes in the political regime. Policy within this view is made at the top and transformed in the course of the bureaucratic and political negotiation process. At the same time, inter-agency competition and the need to secure the support of important political actors such as governors and powerful private interests become

¹It should be noted that recently in the dutch context a number of important debates have been going on on development administration and bureaucracies (Quarles van Ufford Ph., Kruyt D. and Downing T., 1988) and on changing perceptions and conceptions of the development problematic (Hösken, F.D., Kruyt D. and Quarles van Ufford Ph., 1984). However, in this book I have chosen to focus on approaches which make an explicit connection between intervention ideologies, bureaucratic labelling and the state, rather than discussing the relationship between particular images of development and bureaucratic organisation, or issues concerning the linkages between levels in development administration, and between state and non-state organisations (see various contributions in Nas P., Schoorl J. and Galjart B., 1989). In adopting an actor-oriented approach I am interested in the (discursive) practices through which modes of labelling as well as notions of state legitimacy are fashioned. The dutch debate revolves around the relationship between the state as an agent of development, the changing roles of development organisations, and attendant ideologies of development. Reviewing it would have meant addressing the vast literature on 'development and organisation', something I have avoided.

important obstacles in the implementation process, with the result that original policy goals are diluted. With every regime change, the process, then, starts anew. Again, programmes and related implementation structures (new agencies, coordination mechanisms, etc.) are designed in order to tackle the same set of problems with the difference that the 'development ideology' will probably be different.

Grindle's account is theoretically interesting, as she develops an insightful view of the relationship between political culture and the policy process. She examines the policy process from the perspective of the development of the Mexican state and, in relation to this, takes into consideration the central role of organizations such as the PRI (the state party) and the CNC (the National Peasants' Confederation) and other corporatist state organizations in maintaining social order. By focusing on decision-making in the context of bureaucratic negotiation she identifies the sets of transactions that pattern the relationship among the different institutional and non-institutional actors, in what is basically a transactionalist patron-client model. By combining such a model with an analysis of the Mexican's state historically evolved practices of social control, she is able to describe the gap between the objectives and actual outcomes of policy analysis. Moreover, by showing that practices of social control are explicit conditions for, and effects of, state intervention she shows that the policy process cannot, for practical purposes, be separated from the process of political negotiation.

However, in my view her approach is limited since it does not account for the ways in which functionaries interpret and come to terms with abstract policy statements and development ideologies. It is not enough to concentrate on observable transactions. We should also study how functionaries invest their actions with meaning, appropriate policy models, and how they develop forms of practical knowledge which become embodied within particular intervention projects.²

Grindle (1986) elaborates on the same approach in her book Development Policy and Agrarian Politics in Latin America, in which she presents a theoretical approach for analysing the relationship between socio-economic factors (investment patterns within the framework of capitalist accumulation) and political factors and the role of the state within the Latin American context. In contrast to neo-marxist structuralist analysis she conceives of the state as a major actor in shaping the ideology and content of development activities, although she basically agrees with de Janvry's (1981) neo-marxist assessment of the outcomes of agricultural modernization (Grindle 1986:3).

In criticizing the view that state policy is derivative of class relationships she sets out to demonstrate the state elite's variable capacity for autonomous decision-making by focusing on issues like policy choice, political leadership, and state expansion (p.4), and by linking the content of state policy to the development ideologies held by state elites (p.5). In addition, she provides a historical case for concentrating on the development ideologies influencing state policy, by arguing that the state anticipated capitalist expansion in agriculture by establishing in the 1940's and 1950's an extensive administrative and political infrastructure in the countryside, before widespread capitalist investment in export agriculture. This laid the basis for a situation in which subsequently, "the state was [thus] able to increase its power vis-à-vis specific social classes or alliances, and individual agencies acquired control over policy areas that they then used to build their own political and bureaucratic bases" (idem).

²Institutional projects, it has been argued, are shaped by the changing relationships between the institution, the political environment and client constituencies. I have shown, for the Costa Rican case, that these relationships can be conceived in terms of sets of negotiations within a historically evolved framework of institutional commitments, values and understandings. These in turn are the result of a sort of institutional memory which shapes notions of bureaucratic responsibility and authority.

Furthermore, she argues, "so extensive and ongoing was the growth of the state's intervention and so varied was the use of its resources that its activities cannot be fully encompassed by an explanation that rests on capitalist dominance and crisis management alone" (idem)".

In developing a theoretical framework for analyzing the social origin of state policy she draws on the Weberian tradition. Thus, she defines the state as "an enduring executive and administrative apparatus that makes authoritative decisions and exercises control over a given territorial entity". In laying out her own approach she criticizes theories deriving from the corporatist approach (the bureaucratic politics approach) for leaving unaccounted the state's linkages to organized economic interests or considering these as "part of bureaucratic games in which public agencies acquire support groups to press organizational or suborganizational interests on formal decision makers". Consequently, in this view interest groups are largely viewed as being incorporated into the extended state, hence according little autonomy to societal groups.

Finally, she argues for an approach which, in addition to focusing on the role of state elites in the formulation and implementation of public policies, "accounts more fully for the linkages between state and society in terms of the variable autonomy of the state" (p.17).³ Moreover, she contends that state autonomy is a desirable condition sought after by state elites. She also asserts that "relative degrees of autonomy vary over time and across policy arenas" (p.18). Thus, in her account of state intervention in agricultural and rural economies in Latin America she accords special significance to development models or ideologies which, she argues

"not only explained the causes of the economic problems suffered by the region or nation: they also proposed specific policy solutions to these conditions, thereby providing a concrete guide to state actions to change existing realities. Policy makers, therefore, had definite perceptions of how economic growth was to be achieved and they attempted to ensure that state policies actually conformed to their interpretations of cause-and-effect relationships in economic growth" (p.19).

In my view, her approach is highly significant as she breaks open the rigid discussion on the state by focusing on institutional practices in an original way. At the same time she avoids the ahistoricity of managerialist decision-making models which assume the existence of a bureaucratic rationality underlying the policy process. By focusing on the role of important institutional actors such as policy makers she makes it possible to develop a view of state activity as a set of social practices which cannot be reduced to the workings of a class or a mode of production.

Yet, in my view her approach, though insightful, exhibits various shortcomings. Her focus on policy making by state elites without assuming an a priori type of linkage between the state and societal socio-economic interests is correct. In this respect her remarks on the timing of state action in relation to the different stages and types of

³As she puts it, her approach "accepts the possibility that the state, as an executive and administrative apparatus for decision making and control, has identifiable and concrete concerns about the definition and pursuit of national development... These concerns are independent of, but not necessarily opposed to or different from, the immediate interests or welfare of any particular group, class, class fraction, coalition, or alliance in society. This perspective ... provides a framework for focusing on the development belief systems (development ideologies) of policy makers and planners, on the formulation and implementation of specific decisions, and on the skills and influence of particular leaders" (p.17). However, she pays little attention to how front-line workers and administrators adopt, appropriate and transform such development ideologies, so as to become instrumental for dealing with the contradictions of state intervention.

investment in agriculture in Latin America are highly pertinent. Second, her focus on development models/ideologies and their unintended consequences for development may provide useful insights into policy discourse without discarding them as mere justificatory instruments.

Since official development models are not applied comprehensively to specific realities I argue that it is important to examine the ways in which officials appropriate, modify and transform these ideologies by giving them local and practical significance. Thus the conceptual limitations of her state-centred approach lies in the fact that she refrains from inquiring into how various social actors accord meaning to notions of 'development' and 'modernization'. Underlying her analysis is an idealist conception of social action in which the work of state officials is determined by particular development "ideologies", arising within the given framework of capitalist (institutional) modernization.

Another major point of criticism concerns Grindle's neglect of the subjects of reformist state intervention. Thus, I would argue that her approach shares one thing with most neo-marxist structuralist approaches, in that she also views the issue of state autonomy solely in terms of the state's relationship to powerful economic interests, while neglecting the role of rural smallholders, the rural poor and the rural middle classes. Although she mentions the "versatility, vitality, and persistence of peasant subsistence production, even in the face of deteriorating conditions", she basically views them as unresponsive victims of larger processes. However, as I argued before, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are often able to transform the social meaning, political content and actual outcome of state policy.

Thus, in addressing the subject of state autonomy she fails to pay attention to the variety of social actors who do influence the functioning of state institutions. Thus when regarding agricultural policy in Costa Rica, are we only talking about the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis the fruit transnationals, the landed elite? How do we conceive of the attempts by organised farmer's pressure groups, and groups of beneficiaries to shape a particular type of relationship with the state? One important question, then, is how do different types of state-peasant relations impinge upon the functioning - or for that matter the relative autonomy - of the state? A third problem in Grindle's account is that she attributes too much continuity between the world of policy makers and that of implementation, with the result that her treatment of implementation becomes somewhat linear and definitely top-down. It is at the level of implementation, she argues, that the capacity of the state to shape the agricultural structure is foiled, as powerful local and regional actors see possibilities to influence front-line workers and thereby to transform the aims of planned intervention.

My approach is different. Although it is recognized that 'development ideologies' are central to the institutional projects of managers, I argue that it is necessary to inquire into the reality of implementation in order to understand the role that 'intervention ideologies' play in shaping state-peasant relations. Intervention ideologies are instrumental in shaping the bureaucratic attitude front-line workers adopt vis a vis farmers in the administrative domain, in the process imbuing implementation with a definite moral dimension. Conversely, through such ideologies intervention acquires particular meanings for beneficiaries; as attempts to change their ways of life, by being labelled and treated as bureaucratic cases. I will argue in the chapters to come that it is against such experiences of state intervention that farmers react when developing intervention-coping strategies.

5.3 Two Perspectives on Implementation

Grindle's approach to policy implementation in the Third World

In her study of policy implementation in the Third World, Grindle (1980) attempts to draw up a model of "the political and administrative context in which middle-level bureaucratic implementors make decisions". In doing so she concentrates on "how and why resources are often allocated at the local level" (p.198). In this model the implementor is seen as the focus of the frequently conflicting demands and expectations of a set of actors, including the national, regional or local bureaucratic chiefs, the local elite (landowners and influential groups such as businessmen, clergy), the local and regional political sector and bureaucracy, and finally the clients of government organisations.

Furthermore, she argues that implementation in the Third World has special characteristics inasmuch as the political system in most of these countries does not provide satisfactory opportunities for interest representation, a situation conducive to fierce competition for scarce resources at the point of allocation. The implementor then is expected by superiors, at least implicitly, to dedicate him/herself to resolving political problems in addition to his/her usual bureaucratic tasks.

At the same time Grindle holds to a rather negative view on the possibilities of low-status clienteles being able to exercise effective political clout in this competition for influence in the course of the actual implementation process, with the result that they become overly dependent on patronage relationships with local bureaucrats. As she suggests, this situation may not hold for all intended beneficiaries since some,

"... may be able to offer bribes and other pecuniary inducements that might be attractive to him. On some occasions and in some environments, they may have the capacity to create a public disturbance - a demonstration in front of his office, for instance - which may be embarrassing to him or cause problems with superiors. Or, the recipients may have personal ties to politicians who could be mobilized on their behalf. By and large, however, low status clienteles must rely on cultivating personal ties with the administrator, offering him the opportunity to be their benevolent patron and protector in return for their loyalty, deference, and public support" (Grindle 1980; 206).

In short, the argument is that large areas of political decision-making in Third World regimes is displaced to the allocative level in which a series of actors - some very powerful and others less so - fight for the distribution of resources in regional and local arenas. Consequently, even quite radical redistributive programmes might have outcomes which do not work out to the benefit of the targeted clientele due to the ability of various elites to exert influence upon the process of implementation. Moreover, the allocative process, in this view, offers ample opportunities for the development of political patron-client relationships due to the presumed lack of political influence on the part of the poorest sections of the clientele. In this view we obtain an image of the relationship between implementors and low status clientele as one of a triangle without a base, in which clients standing at the bottom have relations of dependence with state representatives standing at the apex of the triangle, but not having relations with each other. The lack of client forms of cooperative organisation in this image is, then, reflected by the absence of the base of the triangle. Accordingly, it is assumed that clients do not organise themselves in other ways than through corporatist politics for the reason that the political cost of autonomous collective organisation is presumed to be too high for them.

This is not to say, however, that Grindle argues that implementors are simply passive recipients or that they are prisoners of the organisational context in which they operate. Rather they might be seen as actors attempting to maximize the achievement of goals in accordance with their perceptions of the situation and their best chances of achieving a variety of goals such as striving for personal enrichment, maintaining a job, anticipating a brighter career future, amassing a personal following, or conforming to professional ideals of the 'good public servant' (p.207). And, although they can rarely avoid alienating the support of one or more groups of actors when pursuing a particular goal, implementors have a repertoire of tactics and strategies at hand for protecting them from the possible retaliation of those whose demands they ignore. These tactics vary from providing false information to higher bureaucratic levels or confusing them with disturbing information, to intimidating low-status clients and establishing alliances with local actors by disclaiming authority over decisions by blaming the straitjacket of rules and regulations imposed on them.

Concluding, she argues that allocation decisions tend to be highly adaptive to local-level and immediate political issues, one effect of this implementation context being that 'decisions to avoid or ameliorate conflict situations will take precedence over those to implement programmes as they are envisioned by policymakers' (p.208). This, in effect, adds to a pragmatic attitude, and possibly to a lack of commitment to programme objectives on the part of front-line workers as they bear the burden of political contradictions at the allocative level.

Grindle's approach is interesting in that she is able to conceive of implementors as actors combining different sets of interests, instead of as powerless characters in a given bureaucratic structure of service delivery. In this respect she has a good feeling for the political nature of implementor's decisions. However, I think that a number of criticisms can be directed to her approach. To begin with, she shares with him a disregard for the tactics clients might display in the allocative process. For, while she conceives of implementors as skilled operators able to create space for manoeuvre for their own projects, she has the tendency to view low status clients as entangled in a 'structure of alternatives' determined by what is essentially a patron-client model. In this model implementors play a special role as brokers in a pattern of transactions of resources and legitimacy between state, local elites and poor clients thus contributing to the transformation of policy within the implementation process.

Another shortcoming of Grindle's approach, I would argue, is that she analyses implementor's strategies in terms of their role within a given bureaucratic and political structure. Such an approach precludes an inquiry into how intervention ideologies emerge as the result of a history of relationships with clients. As we will see later in the chapter, this is a field of research which has been explored by more phenomenologically inclined authors such as Handelman (1976, 1978), Arce (1987), and Arce and Long (1987).

Lipsky's analysis of street-level bureaucracy

In his book on street-level bureaucracy Lipsky (1980) has developed an interesting and original approach to implementation which differs from mainstream managerialist approaches in that he focuses on the social conditions in which implementors, as persons, have to work. Although he makes no explicit reference to developing countries, I think that his analysis has general validity since the central bureaucratic processes he focuses on (what he calls the 'social construction of the client' through practices such as labelling and stereotyping) are common to the practice of non-market service delivery.

Lipsky argues that implementors are forced to develop practices to cope with a variety of pressures, which often contradict the ideals that they bring into service. Consequently, implementors often spend their working lives in 'a corrupted world' of service. Yet they hold to the belief that they are doing the best they can under adverse circumstance, and accordingly they develop techniques to salvage service and decision-making values within the limits imposed upon them by the structure of work. To that end they develop conceptions of their work and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personal and work limitations and the service ideal (Lipsky 1980:xii).

Central to Lipsky's views is the assumption that the demand for free public goods and services always outstrips the offer. At the same time, he argues that relationships between implementors and clients are organised in terms of exchanges within an unequal power structure, a situation which enables implementors to manipulate their clients. Clients dependent on service bureaucracies, therefore, only have one thing to offer: their compliance. Paradoxically this situation confers implementors a high degree of discretion, especially in the case of agencies specialized in the delivery of social services to low-status clients. We obtain, then, a view of implementors not as mere executioners of policy but as playing a critical role in the allocation of goods and services, and hence engaged in the creation of policy.

Lipsky, however, is rather pessimistic about this sort of discretionary power - manifested through adaptive 'coping mechanisms' - and discusses these mechanisms in terms of front-line workers' alienation from their work. Alienation, in his usage, does not stem from the workings of an oppressive ideology but from the stress resulting from the inability of street-level workers to comply with the qualitative and quantitative requirements of their work. In actual service this is reflected in problems in handling the overall 'caseload' which result in a trade-off between the number of client-cases and the time invested in them. As a result adjustments to the needs of individual cases aimed at improving the quality of service lead to a smaller number of cases being treated. He sees front-line workers as creating defenses against the deleterious effects of discretion by providing themselves with a more manageable task and environment. Hence emphasis is placed on the tendency by street-level workers to develop rigid practices as 'survival mechanisms' involving rule conformity. One strategy to attain this is through categorizing and stereotyping, in short by labelling. Labelling is, in Lipsky's view, brought about by the use of simplifying assumptions and the adoption of stereotyped responses to clients in general, which, in his view, can be seen as a 'psychological coping mechanism' resulting from the need for street-level bureaucrats to differentiate between clients.

Labelling and stereotyping are strategies which play a role in shaping the relationship between the street-level bureaucrats and clients, with the function of streamlining service provision. At the same time, however, labelling is also a part of a general process in which persons are ascribed a bureaucratic identity, a process which he calls 'the social construction of a client'. As he puts it,

"People come to street-level bureaucracies as unique individuals with different life experiences, personalities, current circumstances. In their encounters with bureaucracies they are transformed into clients, identifiably located in a very small number of categories, treated as if, and treating themselves as if they fit standardized definitions of units consigned to specific bureaucratic slots. The processing of people into clients, assigning them to categories for treatment by bureaucrats, and treating them in terms of those categories, is a social process. Client characteristics do not exist outside of the process that gives rise to them. An important part of this process is the way people learn to treat themselves as if they were categorical entities" (p.59).

Lipsky's approach is highly suggestive as it focuses on the practices of labelling and stereotyping by which individuals are depersonalized and transformed into bureaucratic cases, while being impelled to define themselves in those very same terms.

However, in my views, Lipsky's overly pessimistic account is problematic, especially in relation to the way in which he conceptualizes social relationships between front-line workers and clients. Thus we see a basically Durkheimian conception of social order as necessarily consensual in order to avoid dysfunctional effects. What he calls alienation (actually better described as 'anomie') is the case when there is a discrepancy between a number of moral commitments and actual performance. This view is seconded by a transactionalist view of social interaction in which the distribution of power is, by definition, held to be regulated within institutional channels, in which compliance by clients is obtained by the agreement not to exercise negative sanctions (i.e. the withholding of essential services or resources). Such a view is expressed in the following statement,

"Every social order depends on the general consent of its members. Even the most coercive institutions, such as prisons, function only so long as those affected by the institution cooperate in its activities (even if the cooperation is secured ultimately by force). Typically, cooperation is neither actively coerced nor freely given, but, rather, it emerges from the structure of alternatives" (p 117).

It is precisely this structure of alternatives which is accepted by Lipsky as lying beyond the reach of social actors' influence and capacities, and thus taken as given. Individuals, in adapting to them, shape patterns of cooperation in accordance with their capacities and (psychological) needs. Thus, he argues that the emerging pattern of cooperation may be deleterious to the stated objectives of an organization, as is the case in servicing bureaucracies. However, in positing the problem in terms of structural contradictions between the organizational requirements of service in the face of 'the virtually unlimited demand of those services', our attention is directed only to determinate types of strategies bearing upon how clients are 'processed'. In relation to these strategies Lipsky distinguishes four basic dimensions to the control exercised by street-level bureaucrats over clients, which affect the process of client construction: (1) distributing the benefits and sanctions that are supposed to be provided by the agencies; (2) structuring the contexts of clients interactions with them and their agencies; (3) teaching clients how to behave as clients; (4) allocating psychological rewards and sanctions associated with clients entering into relationships with them.

Although suggestive in its own right, this account of service bureaucracies has, in my view, major shortcomings, stemming from a number of assumptions made and reflected in the research methodology applied. Accordingly, Lipsky pays, in what is essentially a behaviourist type of analysis, little or no attention to the actual dynamics of the relationships between clients and officials (the social interfaces), with the result that the latter's role is attributed too much power, whereas clients are seen largely as powerless. In effect, what actually is a mix of tactics available to clients - confrontation, avoidance, compliance, politicization - is reduced to only one alternative, that of submitting to the authority of the front-line worker. Client's strategies, in this view, have no more than adaptation or compliance functions in view of their essential vulnerability.

Works that focus on the relationship between implementation and politics (Gridle) stress that implementation is thwarted by elites, or particular pressure groups, holding specific social interests. On the other hand, approaches which focus on organisational contradictions at the level of implementation (Lipsky) see implementors as caught in an

eternal impasse. Both approaches see implementors as responding to outside demands in a rational way, as having to respond to given sets of demands and pressures, whether of a political or organisational nature.

Summarizing, policy transformation has been analysed by authors such as Grindle in terms of the relationship between the 'implementation process' and a 'political system' (or culture). Others (Lipsky) have focussed on the gap between implementor's expectations and the reality of service delivery, analysing the effects that frustrations over the impossibility to respond to the clients' needs have on implementors. Such works have in common that they aim to explain how the rationale of intervention is subverted or transformed by social actors such as implementors but also by other powerful groups.

In effect, in both approaches we see a similar behaviourist methodology which differs only in the underlying problematic; in the case of Lipsky, that of the alienation effects that service bureaucracies have upon implementors, and by extension upon clients; and in the case of Grindle, the displacement of structural (class) contradictions influencing state policy to the level of implementation. Both analyses are similarly pessimistic when accounting for the capacity of ordinary people to influence or shape the system of service delivery or even to force upon the bureaucracy alternative models of service allocation.

One major conclusion of this critique of Lipsky and Grindle, then, is that it is not possible to construct a general theory of the "implementor" on the basis of an ideal-typical portrayal of his/her structural location within a bureaucratic and/or political system. As a consequence, I argue, that it becomes important to focus on the intervention ideologies underpinning front-line worker's styles of operation. In Chapter 3 I defined an intervention ideology as a set of pragmatic beliefs and social practices through which front-line workers and administrators deal with a series of conflicting situations in the process of implementation. It is important to stress that I conceive of ideology as an actor-oriented set of beliefs and social practices, rather than as a unitary meaning system. Concerning planned intervention on behalf of smallholder agriculture such beliefs and practices are related to a particular conception of the farmer, and in the case of the O34 Programme I argued that this conception of the farmer derives from a particular attempt by USAID planners to resolve the agrarian problematic through a client-oriented institutional approach.

5.4 Theorizing the Notion of "Interface".

Handelman's phenomenological approach to bureaucracy

In arguing for an anthropological approach to the study of bureaucracy, Handelman (1978) presents case studies discussing the 'organizational connection' between clients and bureaucrats in Newfoundland and Israel. One reason he gives for concentrating on this theme is the insufficient attention that has been paid to "the clash between the ways in which supralocal institutions conceive of administrative territories and the ways in which territorially based populations conceive of themselves as communities" (1978:5-6). Such clashes take place between bureaucracy and local populations and involve differing definitions of overlapping situations, with each definition supported by a different world of experience, institutional framework, resources and goals. Service delivery is then conceptualized as "the interface across which demands are made, requests evaluated, and allocations rendered with consequence" (idem).

In order to study such clashes he introduces the concept of official/client interface⁴ which he defines as "a crucial point of articulation ... and hence a likely node through which to expose the coercion and fragility of structures of power" (p.6). Indeed, as he argues, a way of revealing this fragility is by showing the role of 'the bureaucratic view' in transmuting the interpretation of the problems and issues it attends. The 'bureaucratic view', it must be stressed, is seen by him as expressing an internal logic of perception and organisation. This does not mean, however, that focusing on the official/client interface simply amounts to studying bureaucratic activity in terms of how a particular rationality - or world-view - is imposed on a particular population. On the contrary, the official/client interface consists of a pattern of meaningful transactions between people operating within determined interpretive schemes.

Thus in a case study of child care in Newfoundland, Handelman adopts a phenomenological perspective in order to elucidate the ways in which a "client case is constructed" by case workers through a process of interpretation in which they "try to attain consistency in explanation by typifying persons and behaviour" (p.64). Such a process of typification takes place through the ascribing of motives to protagonists, an activity which "enables officials to construct the story-line as a cause-and-effect relationship that substantiates the goals and ideology of the organisational life-world" (p.62). The focus, then, is on how the boundaries of relevance are constructed as a flow of contradictory information keeps coming in about the client, in the process making it possible to construct alternative interpretations.

Yet, he argues that the boundaries of relevance are reconstituted through a process of 'retrospective interpretations' in which a 'biographical stretch' is established. Underlying these notions we find the assumption that it is possible to understand a character's present behaviour in terms of his/her past motivation. Thus by holding to the notion of a 'personal history' the reach for consistency in the story is extended to the past. Both devices - retrospective interpretation and biographical stretch - lead, according to him, to a reified structure of the case being constructed. The reason for this lies in the way officials' performance is assessed, that is in terms of the number of cases they are able to resolve. Handelman refers to this as the striving for 'bureaucratic closure'. Bureaucratic closure, then, is achieved through a dialectic between the interpretation of (new) relevant data and the emerging structure of the case.

This analysis leads him to conclude that, "bureaucratic personnel perceive their organisational life-world and its tasks in positivist terms", and he argues that (p.66),

"This is why a phenomenological perspective that assumes the bureaucratic life-world to be an arbitrary but integrated and meaningful social construct can illuminate the interpretive dynamics which enable this life-world to function in accordance with its positivist assumptions about its own procedures and accomplishments".

Although providing a useful research agenda Handelman's transactionalist and phenomenological approach has major shortcomings when applied to the development interface. To begin with it does not take into account the role of variables such as gender, class, ethnicity and locality in the structuring of the organisational lifeworld. As I showed in the previous chapters, variations in the social and personal commitments of

⁴I adopt Handelman's notion of official/client's but use it in a different way. For that reason I use the term client-official.

officials plays an important role in shaping the multiple realities of the organisational lifeworld. Thus, in holding to a rather unitary view of the officials' organisational lifeworld, while abstracting from the bureaucrats involvement in wider sets of social networks, this approach wrongly assumes that there is only one interpretive context influencing officials' thinking.⁵

Indeed, it can be argued that it is this tacit assumption that leads Handelman to posit that bureaucratic personnel develop positivist conceptions of their task environment. This is too limited a view of the official/client interface. In the final instance, it amounts to no more than the study of the effects on clients, and the organizational lifeworld, of attempts by officials to apply rules to cases. This, I think, is a rather conventional problematic and contributes little to the understanding of the dynamics of contrasting types of official/client interfaces.

In developing this critique I will outline the problematic aspects of the two central ideas he works with: that of closure of the case and that of bureaucrat's positivism. To begin with, the assumption of closure of the case is a problematic one, as bureaucrats very often have a continuing relationship with clients. Closure might have been achieved on paper but this does not mean that it is the case in the actual social interfaces in the administrative or field domains. Furthermore, it might be more useful to view the process of interpretation not so much as a means for achieving consistency or congruence in the story, but as a means of ensuring an ongoing relationship between both parties. Interpretive processes, then, cannot be viewed outside a strategic, performative context.

Second, and following from the previous point, I would argue that if we accept that the interpretive process is embedded within a power struggle in which the bureaucracy attempts to impose its world-view, we have to take into account the attempts of all parties - including those of the clients - to influence, if not to shape, the actual organisational contexts, themes and rules which make the bureaucratic context meaningful to all parties. Meaningfulness is not only the result of an intersubjective endeavour, but emerges within the confines of struggles over access to authority and resources. The production of meaning is not merely an interpretive process, but a way of exercising power within the wider context of institutional efforts to exert social control over a given population. This entails that it is important to study how bureaucrats attempt to impose particular conceptions of the 'deserving client' or the 'good farmer' by way of labelling practices, as well as the clients' efforts to resist such practices.

Third, the assertion of bureaucrat's positivism is problematic for the reason that in actual contexts of negotiation it is difficult for officials to sustain a stable bureaucratic world-view, as a taken-for-granted entity. To the extent that such a world-view exists, it has to be defended and legitimized in front of clients. I would argue then that instead of conceiving of the organisational life-world as an "integrated and meaningful social construct", we should view it as negotiated and essentially contested. The problem with phenomenological approaches such as those propounded by Schutz and Luckmann in assuming a sort of "naturalism", is that they render the actual dynamics of social relationships with people as "unproblematic". Interest is paid to how social actors come to (mis)-understand each other, but not to how they cognitively conceptualize and find ways to tackle concrete livelihood problems. Indeed, the actor's point of view is not taken seriously in its own right but is seen as an effect

⁵I take this point from Arce (1989:48-49).

of the dynamics of a particular interactional (e.g. administrative) context.⁶ Concluding, I would argue that Handelman's interface approach, though theoretically sophisticated as well as ethnographically skilled, is limited insofar as it precludes a detailed examination of the ongoing flow of social relations between officials and clients while conferring on the bureaucratic lifeworld an unwarranted degree of - cultural - autonomy. Thus in adopting Handelman's notion of the official/client interface I make a distinction between social interfaces in the administrative domain and in the field domain. Social interfaces in the administrative domain do exhibit a number of features Handelman describes in his discussion of the organisational lifeworld. However, as I showed in the previous chapters the organisational lifeworld in the Neguev Regional Office is more characterized by a lack of purpose and commitment than by a coherent and effective bureaucratic world view. Thus client-official interfaces in the field domain encompass those non-administrative settings in which officials and clients interact, and which provide the officials with a set of - often disturbing - experiences which add to the existing divisions of the organisational lifeworld. Subsequently, I concentrated on how officials construct operational styles on the basis of their participation in wider social networks, and thereby find ways to overcome the conflict of loyalties between the administrative and the field domains. In effect, this distinction between social interfaces in the administrative and field domains made it possible for me to combine an interest in administrative practices of social control (as manifested in labelling) with a detailed study of the dynamic of encounters between bureaucrats and settlers in less formalized non-administrative settings.

Long's interface approach focusing on structural discontinuities

Norman Long (1984, 1986b, 1988, 1989; and with van der Ploeg 1989) has developed a different notion of interface in an ongoing debate with political economy approaches - whether in Marxian "commoditization" or in (neo)-modernization "incorporationist" guises. In his view these theories are lacking to the extent that they advance a view of development as determined by unilinear, externalist and determinist or inevitable processes.⁷ His aim is not that of discovering general or universal laws, processes or tendencies but to reach an understanding of how "ordinary people - peasants, workers, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and others - are actively engaged in shaping the outcomes of processes of development" (1984:169). To that effect Long focuses on social actors, who are not seen merely as "carriers" of history but as endowed with human agency,

"which means recognizing that individuals, whether they be peasants, landlords or bureaucrats, attempt to come to grips with the changing world around them and that they do this both cognitively on the basis of existing cultural categories, ideologies and forms of practical consciousness, and organisationally in the way they interact with other individuals and social groups" (p.171).

Accordingly Long occupies a unique place in the sociology of development in that he applies a phenomenological perspective which gives pride of place to the ability of social actors to attribute meaning to changes in the wider political economy and to give

⁶It should be noted that there is a lack of epistemological symmetry in this approach, for it is possible to assume positivism on the part of the researched only to the extent that a distinction is made between researchers' scientific knowledge and the bureaucrats world-view. This, in fact, entails assuming that the former is "true knowledge" whereas the latter is belief. The hallmark of scientific positivism, indeed.

⁷For a trenchant critique of neo-marxist development sociology see Booth (1985). The critique, however devastating, does not lead him to an alternative conceptualisation of the field.

shape to their effects on the local scene.⁹ He thereby chooses to focus on localized practices of state intervention - seen as an arena in which not only the bureaucracy but also other actors representing commercial and landed interests participate in order to document the various ways in which people create room for manoeuvre for their "own projects". As he puts it. "All forms of external intervention necessarily enter the life-worlds of the individuals and social groups affected and thus, as it were, pass through certain social and cultural filters" (171). This has led to the development of a methodological and theoretical perspective based on the concept of "social interface",

... "based upon the simple notion of focusing upon the critical points of intersection between different levels of social order where conflicts of value and social interest are most likely to occur ... Studies of social interfaces should aim to bring out the dynamic and emergent character of the interactions that take place and to show how the goals, perceptions, interests, and relationships of the various parties may be reshaped as a result of being brought into interaction" (p.177).

In applying this notion of social interface to the study of state-peasant relations he chooses not to focus on large-scale historical processes of struggle and resistance, in order to discover "structures of domination", but focuses instead on the actual models and practices of planned intervention at hand, as they are constructed, modified and transformed by the actors' involved. Such practices, then, are not made subservient to their significance within any historical model, but are examined as meaningful in their own right. History and structural notions, are introduced, not as explanatory variables, but as contextualizing and indicative concepts which help us to deepen our understanding of the various struggles involved in "state-peasant relations". Moreover - and I think this is an important advantage over Handelman's phenomenological perspective - Long's approach enables us to develop a sense of "reflexivity" as it shows that "intervention models" are themselves being shaped and legitimized by planning and policy models, and in this way he shows the role played by social and administrative science in the current evolution of state-peasant relations as taking place within the process of implementation of development projects and programmes.

We see also that the notion of interface undergoes a conceptual development. Initially the methodology of social interfaces focussed on interactional processes and fields, considered to be "linked into larger scale systems", while interfaces were seen as containing within them "different and often conflicting value systems or rationalities", and instrumental in revealing "the nature of state-peasant relations in particular localities or regions, and thus indirectly facilitating a fuller understanding of the character and significance of state formations" (p.179). Subsequently we see that under the influence of the sociology of knowledge, structural and cultural issues become more closely integrated with an actor perspective. Since then his major aim has become that of developing a sociology of everyday life of relevance for 'development' issues (see also Long 1990, 1992).

This revised "interface" approach has led to a number of interesting - if for some disturbing ethnographies - in which the received tool kit of intervention "sciences", such as extension and planning, are undermined. One illustration of such an ethnography is provided in an article written with Alberto Arce (Arce and Long 1987) on "knowledge interfaces" in which the authors apply ideas deriving from the work of Knorr-Cetina (1981). There we see a shift from viewing "intervention" as an arena in

⁹See Aiden Foster Carter's (1987) interesting reflections on the absence of a phenomenological, or "actor-oriented" perspective in development sociology.

which various actors struggle for access to resources, to one which concentrates on how "intervention" is socially constructed on the basis of the clash between systems of differentiated stocks of knowledge - that of the bureaucracy and that of rural producers. In this particular case study they focus upon the difficulties a *técnico*, or extensionist, encounters when having to face the conflicting demands of smallholder producers and his administrative superiors. In fact, various attempts initiated by him in order to bridge the contradictions between his development views and those of his clients fail, with the result that the differences between the bureaucratic and local knowledge systems are exacerbated.

Here again we see an approach based on the assumption of social discontinuities, as implicitly suggesting the possibility that the reproduction of systems of ignorance might be reinforced through strategies adopted by farmers for dealing with "intervening parties" such as extensionists, etc. Yet the approach is clearly actor oriented as they reject types of "culturalist" explanations which assume that "cultural values and norms, or cognitive structures, are somehow external to ... social interaction". In fact, they take the view that knowledge systems are internally highly differentiated, as they arise from "the specificities of the life-world experiences and careers of particular individuals" (p.28).

In comparing Long's interface approach with that of Handelman we see a number of differences. To begin with Long's interest in bureaucratic knowledge systems is not so much directed to an understanding of a particular cultural pattern, or world-view, but is motivated by an interest in issues of development. "Culture", in his usage is not, in the final instance, the object of analysis, but a necessary element for understanding how particular world-views influence local dynamics while stressing that people themselves endow social change with meaning within their everyday life. In contrast to Handelman, Long treats "culture" more in a cognitive way, as socially differentiated knowledge, than in an aesthetic fashion. Another difference is that in focusing on the reproduction of "ignorance" the focus does not lie on how functionaries process clients and situations as "cases". In this way the problematic assumption of achievement of "closure" is avoided.

Instead, a strong emphasis is placed on "strategic action" and, especially in a material sense, in the various ways in which resources are managed and their access secured. This is reflected in an enduring involvement in the "commoditization debate" (Long 1986), in which a position is taken against deterministic views which deny the role producers play in giving shape to, organisationally, the types and levels of involvement in commodity, labour and input markets. Thus, while adopting a perspective grounded in "knowledge", Long rejects decision-making or rational choice approaches which concentrate on individual action as something that can be abstracted from the sets of social relationships in which social action is embedded. To that end he applies a number of methodological notions such as social networks, arenas and social fields which provide a sense of "structure" by virtue of which individuals and organisational units - households, various forms of cooperation - function.⁹

One point of critique, however, is that the interface approach still lacks a conceptual framework for studying state 'intervention' within the perspective of the genesis and evolution of institutional practices. Thus we see a lack of a detailed analysis of bureaucratic techniques - such as labelling and types of administrative

⁹It should be noted that the concept of interface has been appropriated in a positivistic way by linking it to (soft) systems analysis and rapid rural appraisal methodologies. In attempting to provide the tools for social engineering such approaches are rather weak in social analysis (see Doorman 1991).

practices by which access and issues of eligibility are dealt with - which sustain the reproduction of administrative modes of intervention.

In addition, little attention is paid to the kaleidoscope of tactics smallholder beneficiaries deploy in dealing with state representatives. For that reason I argue that it is important to study the various types of discursive practice - of cooperation, community and citizenship/democracy - which social actors deploy in the everyday politics of state intervention and intervention-coping. Thus I will show in the coming chapter that these types of discursive practice are used for subverting and confronting practices of social control and domination.¹⁰

Consequently, I concentrate in the second part of this book on how social actors actively construct the social world by skillfully drawing upon a series of local and dominant (i.e. administrative) types of discursive practice. The concept of social interface, then, can help us find the critical contexts in which such types of discursive practice are generated and deployed, and I will return to this point later in the chapter.

But next I will discuss an approach to administrative process which attempts to provide a theoretical framework for analysing different kinds of encounters between bureaucrats and beneficiaries.

5.5 The Politics of Access

Bernard Schaffer in a number of co-authored articles has developed an original approach for studying how beneficiaries gain access to services in administrative systems, which departs in a significant way from the usual manner in which the issue is treated in the development administration literature. While starting from - at least from an anthropological point of view - a rather restricted and technocratic definition of the problematic, he is able to broaden the issue so as to include the wider political and administrative factors involved in the identification and conceptualization of access problems, and the attendant design of administrative structures intended for handling these problems. In drawing on the work of Hirschman (1970; 1974) on exit, voice and loyalty, Schaffer together with Lamb (1976) defines the problem of access as "the relations between the administrative allocation of goods and services and the people who need them or for whom they are intended" (p.73). He pays special attention to the process of "service definition" as requiring "the move from policy activity to the institutionalisation of programmes, so that resources can be allocated and an organisation built to carry it through". Indeed, it is precisely in this context that an access problem arises, a problem which is intimately connected to the activity of bureaucratic penetration. For, as he argues, in attacking the myth of decisionality (1984), policy is not innocent, and neither are its workings obvious. Different policies could always have been considered, and often still can. Accordingly, the political nature of policy is revealed in access situations, where policy encounters a reality which is very different from, and responsive to other interests than those of policy makers.

Access situations and encounters, in short, relate to who gets what and in what ways, in relations between people (such as settlers) and administrative allocations (such as subsidized credit, land ownership titles, the right to participate in particular

¹⁰In addition we see that the concept of interface has been appropriated by a number of works which incorporate it within (soft) systems or rational choice approaches (see respectively Röling 1988) and van Dusseldorp 1990). In my view such approaches are a step backwards from Long's social-constructivist approach.

programmes). These linkages are established through eligibility procedures, determining that some individuals will be selected as beneficiaries to certain programmes and others will be excluded. Beneficiaries are, in contrast to common public policy approaches, not viewed as passive recipients. Instead, the focus lies on 'how transactions emerge and are constructed between people and authoritative allocating institutions' and thereby shape bureaucratic administrative processes. These transactions in turn lead to certain types of intermediary (1986: 362).

It must be noted that by focusing on access situations the authors do not attempt to provide a formal (i.e. explanatory and predictive) theory of the "organisational connection" between institutions and applicants. Instead a number of concepts are developed to enable analysts to make sense of problematic situations resulting from the state's attempts to define particular social problems in terms of people's lack of access (due to "marginality", poverty, lack of organisational capacity or other deficiencies). The focus ultimately lies on people's responses to such attempts and the possible effects on political activity: Thus they concentrate on a number of factors structuring access situations and the various ways in which people respond to or attempt to influence these situations (i.e. voice and exit). As they put it,

"The major problem ... is that we have been taken to the threshold of politics and of institutional processes: the need is for a systematic analysis linking particular processes and outcomes with types of voice activity" (Lamb and Schaffer, 1976:83).

It must be emphasized that they do not concentrate on particular types of behaviour, as in the case of behaviourist approaches to policy administration, but on different access situations; and especially on how these are shaped organisationally through an ongoing process of negotiation. What is interesting here is that "access" is not posited as a "natural" problem of scarcity and poverty in the sense that this problem exists outside of the policy process and the administrative structures of the state. As Schaffer argues in an article on Irish itinerants,

"The question is whether there is an objective world of problems outside the problems with which the practices of policy claim to be concerning themselves. In practice policy constructs those sorts of agendas of problems which can be handled. It then labels the items on those agendas as problems in particular ways. For example, people become referred to as categories of target-groups to whom items of services can be delivered" (1985:33).

In focusing on the process of service delivery the politics of access is viewed as part and parcel of the mode of intervention of specific institutions, with specific groups and individuals, in specific periods of time, and (often) in specific locations. This entails that different types of localized access politics cannot be lumped together and endowed with a unified dynamic, as implied in models which see the main contradictions as that of citizen versus the government, or for that matter farmers against the state. The politics of access by definition differ according to the institutions and agencies structuring the conditions of access. We see that clearly in the case of the institutional field of rural development in Costa Rica where the same services are provided by say, the national banking system or the IDA's Credit Fund under rather different conditions. Certainly, as Schaffer makes all too clear, eligibility rules, ordering and counter arrangements are for each institution different.

In relation to - or should we say as a response to - access, the notion of voice is introduced. Voice refers to the different types of tactics an applicant can resort to,

given the fact that in access situations there exists "much discretion, much room for interpretation and therefore for the exercise of voice by an applicant" (p.75). In this view decisions as to eligibility are not without consequences in the types of voice that will be used and on the relationship between official and the applicant. It is in such apparently technical problems, I think, that the language of access succeeds in exposing the political aspects inherent in implementation. Thus, as Schaffer asserts, "the eligibility conditions, the gateways, will look different on either side of the gate" - that is they are viewed and experienced differently by front-line workers and beneficiaries, by the beneficiaries included and by those excluded - "they will look different at various institutional levels" - that is they acquire differing meanings for implementors and administrators - and therefore, "they will have surprising effects on the implementation of policy, on what the ideology comes to mean". The gateway here becomes a metaphor for signalling the various ways in which types of eligibility are organisationally structured through an ongoing struggle over the definition of who is entitled to what, for how long, under which conditions, etc. Yet, on the other hand, eligibility choices can also be circumvented, subverted, undermined by actors - often having political support - employing a determinate kind of "voice". Indeed politicization might be the case during the administrative process prior to, and accompanying provision.

Counter-labelling and intervention-coping

Access theory has been further developed by Geoff Wood (1986) as a way of analysing labelling as a current practice in administrative encounters. More than Schaffer, however, he addresses the legitimation function (or authoritativeness) of the ideology of intervention - or as he calls it the 'technico-rational' model - in determining the structure of agency-recipient exchanges. In brief, he regards this model as a "highly functional model or ideology for bureaucratic survival...since it diffuses the issue of responsibility and disorganizes subordinate classes while imposing bureaucratic order .."(p.477).

At the same time, he argues that the model is not homogeneous owing to the fact that the image of technico-rationality is inherently contradictory, "since the imposition of bureaucratic order entails the organisation of recipients (or potential recipients) as well as their disorganisation" (487). Within this view, science plays a central role as it renders the model with the necessary legitimation (while not its rationale), by providing the taxonomies, classifications, typologies, which underly the bureaucratic decision-making sequence. It should be noted, however, that this leads to a highly pessimistic picture of recipients' capacity to influence - and much less to shape - the outcomes of administrative encounters. As he puts it (p.478),

"The ideology of service is: delivery from organized institutions informed by science to disorganized recipients motivated only by immediate individual, family, sectional or class interest. Attempts by them to organize for improved access, and/or re-labelling purposes, become a challenge to the rationality implied by the model".

Accordingly, Wood tends to stress the structural characteristics of the organisational connection while conceiving of administrative encounters in terms of clashes between a technico-rationality and people, the latter becoming disorganized by them. Encounters, in this view, are determined by the operation of an administrative ideology or rationality bolstered by administrative science, while the people involved in such encounters seem to play a minor role in structuring such encounters. If resistance takes place it is the result of 'systemic disorganization', and not because of their active deployment of

strategies of intervention-coping. Nevertheless, Wood does allow for the emergence of forms of counter-labelling.

Counter-labelling as resistance to labelling

In developing his views on counter-labelling, Wood draws attention to the limitations of labelling practices in terms of the rationality in which they are embedded. Thus he argues that if the authoritative model of agency-recipient relations is too narrow and rigid this is not so much owing to the active strategizing of the 'clients' but because the hegemonic model contains contradictions which create spaces of resistance for the clients. He writes,

"Labelling is essentially a contradictory process in the sense that its primary function of disorganising the dominated, the weak, the vulnerable, the poor or just the excluded (via the decomposition of their story into separate cases) contains simultaneously the potential of reorganising interests around the solidarities which the labelling might itself engender. It is perhaps more accurate then to recognise hegemonic tendencies in this labelling process rather than hegemony itself" (Wood 1985:20).

In this view, such 'solidarities' engender forms of counter-labelling. As he argues, solidarities are created consequent upon continuous and long-term relationships between agencies and recipients, leading people to recognize their shared labels. Thereafter such groups can coalesce into nationwide forms of political action, or lead to forms of cooptation as in patron-client relations. We see then that labelling, defined as an objective process, might be "resisted" only when a shared consciousness emerges as a result of having been labelled. In effect, people acquire agency through labelling.

However, this "objectivist" conception of labelling is limited for various reasons. For one thing, labelling in the integrated rural development programme I studied, was characteristic in administrative practice, especially at the implementation level, and acquired great significance in the administrative domain, especially in bureaucratic encounters in which applicants played a subservient role. However, at the point of interaction between recipients and functionaries in non-administrative settings, labelling became problematic as in the field, the categories used in labelling appeared to be limited. Thus the extensionists, social workers and other field bureaucrats encountered a reality which was much more complex than assumed in the administrative domain. Labelling then can better be viewed as part of an ideology of intervention which has more effect in some settings than in others. In the context of service delivery, relationships between officials and smallholders - the client-official interface - appeared often to be underwritten by strong forms of moral argumentation employed by the recipients. In Wood's terms, in the field a "case" became again a "story", and modes of administrative labelling (of classification and stigmatization) gave way to the necessity of front-line workers to legitimize their activities.

In effect, no technico-rationality endured the complex relationships between settlers and functionaries, in which the latter had to respond to the former's moral claims and demands for responsibility, while confronted with specific settler's histories. In a sense it could be argued that counter-labelling existed. Settlers had distinct views of what a 'good' and a 'bad' official was and what the weak and the strong aspects of state agencies were. Accordingly they used these views in order to forge dissenting organizations. All the same, it would be false to view counter-labelling and attendant attempts to forge solidarities as the only imaginable response to intervention. It will be argued in the coming chapters that 'intervention' is only in exceptional cases resisted head-on: sometimes some elements are resisted while others are welcomed, while on

other occasions intervention is deconstructed by the beneficiaries themselves in order to show that it means something quite different than in officials' discourse. The outcome, then, is a set of intervention-coping strategies for dealing with intervention, ranging from accomodation, resistance and manipulation.

Concluding, it can be argued that in a similar vein to administrative labelling, counter-labelling was part of a struggle, part of a set of negotiations in which the specificities of the organisational connection were negotiated. Counter-labelling, then, could certainly not be equated with some sort of resistance in which settler/smallholders were assumed to have certain essential characteristics and interests in common. Instead it was a practice which settlers used in particular contexts and for a variety of purposes.

The language of access and social interfaces: some critical remarks

First, it must be emphasized that relations between state representatives and clients are imbued with moral significance, leading to the forging of strong moral relationships. Concerning the notion of "voice" it could be argued that though it refers to the various types of responses open to applicants, the analysis seems to stem from some notion of an administrative logic underlying the organisational connection. Although there are good reasons for maintaining that the discourse and practices of development administration are indeed pervasive, actual implementation encounters a reality which cannot be comprehended only in terms of access situations. A focus on access then may serve as providing a set of sensitizing concepts for studying intervention practices. However, it seems to me that it is limited for the empirical study of intervention-related organisational forms (e.g. implementation structures).

Indeed, one shortcoming in the approach is that it lacks an ethnographic basis. If the aim is that of examining the interconnections between politics and institutional processes by means of "a systematic analysis linking particular processes and outcomes with types of voice activity" and not the testing or replication of a number of propositions based on a model of political activity (as in Hirschman's original formulation (1970: 83)) an impressionistic approach will not suffice. A detailed methodology must be constructed for drawing comparisons between specific types of access situations and "voice" in different organisational and cultural contexts. Only by taking into account the role of non-administrative discursive practices (e.g. 'community', 'democracy') and local, situated, practices of local organisation will it be possible to highlight the actual dynamics of the organisational connection.

I would argue that different types of "voice" emerge, not merely as a logical and predictable response to the structuring of scarcity through the establishment of access structures, but from a stock of local knowledge comprising a repertoire of strategies of accomodation, confrontation/resistance and manipulation. The choice of strategy is to a large part the result of prior experiences in access situations, and strongly influenced by participation in a variety of local arenas of struggle. It is within these arenas that "voice" is politicised and endowed with moral significance. Voice, in short, is not an individual - or for that matter an aggregate - response, it is socially constructed within the context of local forms of cooperation and communal organisation. Accordingly, the institutional connection is but one of several arenas in which farmers develop voice.

This means that actor's - clients and officials - interpretations of access situations within the context of their livelihood problematics need to be central in the analysis. This I think is crucial, especially in order to avoid exhaustive explanations of institutional failure in terms of rational choice and universalistic models. As Schaffer and his co-authors show very well in their discussion of brokerage and corruption there are clear advantages in treating different types of voice as strategic elements within

wider struggles and not in terms of individual choice. One relevant question then becomes how "voice" is distributed in a particular social field by focusing on particular actors, such as intermediaries.

Finally, I would argue that responses to intervention do not only consist of "voice" (through mobilization, brokerage, and the exhaustion of administrative process) but also include individual and group strategies directed to penetrating the bureaucracy, shaping alternative access structures, and thereby questioning the existing bureaucratic access systems. It is to such political strategies that I turn next when proposing an alternative framework for studying relationships between bureaucrats and farmer/beneficiaries.

5.6 Labelling and the Deconstruction of Development Discourse

Very useful for analysing legitimacy is the work of Apthorpe (1986) on discourse in politics. He shows how language is used to construct and legitimize particular sets of codes, rules and roles. Seen in this way policy discourse can become a sort of rationalization of the hegemony of particular actors within the 'development arena'. As he argues,

"discursive practice' can be taken as an example of the capture and exercise of power by some sorts of people, arguments and organizations against others through specific happenings, in particular arenas, over various periods of time (1986:377)".

Indeed, one difference between official and political discourse, and development policy discourse, is that the latter "justifies itself as being professional and scientific, and on that account socially and politically and altogether unproblematic" (p.378).

Apthorpe analyses the 'discursive habits' of social scientists engaged in development studies by applying a semiotic approach inspired by Barthes and others. Such 'deconstruction of policy discourse' is, in his view, not simply an intellectual enterprise; on the contrary, it has a constructive purpose: that of reminding that "facts never speak for themselves, they are bespoken and spoken for". The reason for focusing on the language of development is that of stressing that "there are always alternatives, some of which may remain to be considered again, even those which have been rejected on other grounds". And, also that contradiction and conflict are always inherent in the actual practice of public policy [what he calls *policyspeak*, Apthorpe 1985]. He argues that there are

"always some [who] suffer painful or, at least, highly unsuccessful efforts to take policy, so to speak at its 'word'. It is precisely so as to manage, to exclude, or otherwise deal with potential contradictions and conflict that development policy discourses have constructed their ploys and games. These discursive ploys are available only to certain sorts of participant who for the most part are themselves labelled and disguised so as to avoid a full display or enlightenment about what they are doing (p.385)".

Apthorpe, together with Schaffer and Wood (1986) argues that development intervention goes together with forms of labelling which stigmatize people - as 'poor', 'resourceless' and 'dependent' - and hence reduce their capacity to engage in independent organizations. In their view the administrative project model mainly serves

to legitimize state intervention and depoliticize the issue of the role of the state; thus by bestowing on entire categories of people an identity as 'clients'. This is apparent when individuals are forced as 'clients' to adopt the discourse of bureaucrats in order to express their needs. Development administration, then, cannot be viewed as external to the problem of 'development' but is itself constitutive of it. Indeed one might argue that it has a significant function in producing the actual shape in which it appears. Thus Schaffer argues that scarcities are constructed through discourses of development along with social practices of administration, and that they lead to a specific mode of social control and legitimacy.

However, neither Schaffer nor Apthorpe in their critique of development discourse and the evasion of responsibility (through the escape hatches built into development administration thinking) follow the issue through to the field, to the level of actual implementation, where a different dynamic holds from that of the planners' lifeworlds. It could be argued then that the discursive practices related to planned intervention are put to different uses by different people and that they therefore have different effects. To take an example: Apthorpe's (1984) distinction between physicalist, institutionalist and distributionist discourses of agricultural development is highly suggestive, and it can be applied to an analysis of how policy is made at the IDA. Yet, as I just argued, this distinction throws little light on the actual dynamics of power struggles within the institution (and even less at the level of the client-official interface). Thus we can say that Don Antonio Salgado, the IDA's former Executive President, exhibited a mixture of an institutionalist and distributionalist discourse. Certainly we find a high degree of coherence in his views. Yet this coherence is the result of an understanding based on his practical knowledge which he acquired in the course of his career. It would be, in my view, mistaken to explain this conceptual coherence in terms of the semiotic structure of the texts in which intervention ideologies are constructed. In short, intervention ideologies are not only produced within texts but also, and especially, in real-life struggles.

In concluding I argue that it is useful to undertake a semiotic analysis to texts in order to identify the codes by which a discourse of development policy is shaped. Yet, such enterprise should be coupled with an analysis of institutional struggles in terms of competing institutional projects and styles of operation social actors develop by engaging in problematic confrontations.

Summary

On the basis of the previous theoretical review we can draw the following conclusions. Behaviourist approaches to implementation (Lipsky and Grindle) view bureaucrats actions as rational responses to particular implementation structures. They fail to inquire into how intervention ideologies and labelling practices are shaped, modified and transformed by local level bureaucrats in the process of service delivery.

Phenomenological approaches to bureaucracy (Handelman and Long) do pay attention to state officials' ideologies, but they are not able to come to grips with the wider power struggles in which relationships between farmers and bureaucrats are embedded. Accordingly, it is argued that forms of labelling and legitimation practices cannot be understood without a wider historical perspective on intervention practices. In addition such studies have not been able to deal with intervention-coping as a set of political strategies deployed by clients/beneficiaries. When addressing the issue of farmers' responses to change they tend to apply concepts such as social interface in order to analyse the function of local conflicts in given institutional systems; in which case change is still endowed with some kind of logic, thus implying an externalist view of social change. By contrast, I argue that instead of analysing social situations and

events in terms of dichotomies such as structure and action, or actor and system, or adopting linear models such as implied in intervention models, it is more interesting to view how institutional practices and global ideologies of development are attributed with local meaning. This is what I call localization practices. Thus I have attempted to show in Chapters 3 and 4 how front-line workers actively appropriate and transform a particular policy geared to establishing a novel mode of institution-client relationship.

Approaches focusing on the 'organisational connection' (Schaffer) do inquire into the contrasting ways in which state-subjects respond to state intervention. Yet, in starting from a rather restricted view of the problematic they get stuck with a conception of 'voice' (or in my terms intervention-coping) framed in terms of 'rational' reactions of individuals to certain kinds of bureaucratic organisation (as in the case of access). Furthermore, although they pay attention to labelling as an element of power in bureaucrat-beneficiary relations, they fail to inquire into the wider sets of social and political relationships which shape administrative structures of access.

In Chapter 2 I argued that one way of developing an institutional perspective to bureaucratic activity which rejects both linear views of intervention and reifications of the state is by concentrating on institutional projects. Yet, such a perspective, though focusing on beneficiaries' and front-line workers and their connection, fails to analyse how beneficiaries actively develop strategies in order to deal with state intervention.

Institutional approaches to the state such as Grindle's which focus on the role of development ideologies in the way state policy is designed, tend to underestimate the capacity of the targets of policy (such as farmers) to shape the relationship with the state bureaucracy in such a way that policy acquires a very different meaning at the level of implementation. In addition, it can be said of Grindle that she holds to an idealized view of a development ideology, which neglects the practices of labelling and legitimization which bolster a particular understanding of rural development by implementors (in terms of specific models of the 'client').

Lastly, in searching for a concept of discursive practice which is useful for studying intervention-coping, semiotic analysis was found to be limited as it only applies to textual analysis. Hence a choice is made for an approach to intervention-coping based on discursive strategies.

5.7 Establishing an Analytical Framework for the Study of Bureaucrats-Farmers Relations Centred on Discursive Practice

In approaching the theme of legitimacy in terms of discursive practice it should be emphasized that discourse cannot be viewed as distinct from specific, situated intervention practices. Thus the discourse of development policy can be viewed as a set of institutionalized practices which inform the activities of actors involved in writing plans, evaluations, etc. In this vein, it could be argued that discourse - as in the case of academicians, policy makers and others - is itself a form of practice, entailing the active production of interpretations of specific problematics by making specific connections between concepts and empirical reality while enforcing the authority of 'science' and 'expertise'. This activity, it should be stressed requires a number of skills - of persuasion, argumentation - and the ability to translate the needs of others in delineating particular problematics (see Macdonnell 1986 on discourse theories).

Discourse as an element of social practice then encompasses: first, the discursive skills necessary for setting up authoritative arguments, or truth claims, required for the production of certain forms of institutionalized knowledge, as in the case of the

discourses of development; second, the discursive skills required for dealing with different types of knowledge - formal and institutionalized but also common or local knowledge - in particular settings and social context. That is the case, for example, when radical peasant leaders refer to the history of repression by the state, in rallying support for specific struggles for legal access to land. Lastly, besides discursive practices we find non-discursive practices which refer to the shared practical knowledge that is required for accomplishing a multiplicity of everyday tasks. It is such non-discursive practices which constitute particular livelihood strategies as reflected in particular combinations of sets of activities within and between households.

The deconstruction of the first type of discursive practices -or as Apthorpe calls them discursive habits - might be useful for reminding the various actors in development that nothing in what experts do and write is self-evident, unquestionable and unobjectionable. The second type of discursive practice seems interesting for analysing how social identities are constructed in specific struggles for access to (state)-resources and the enforcement of 'citizenship rights'. Yet it is not only within broader movements or hegemonic projects that discourse is developed, but also within a number of everyday life settings based on family, community, market and a variety of institutional contexts (legal, educational, etc.). Sabeen makes the same point when he argues that 'what is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument, the same reasoning, the same Rede, the same discourse, in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are threshed out' (Sabeen, 1984:29-30).

Thus, in the following chapters I am intent on examining how a variety of discourses are used, transformed or created by social actors and to relate such discursive practices to the ways in which they construct intervention-coping strategies. This requires that we examine how, why and in what social context social actors, employ particular discursive practices, and in relation to which problems. In this way we might acquire a feeling of the diverse roles that 'the state' plays in the social practices of the various actors, whether farmers, front-line workers, policy makers, researchers who write about the state, and other 'outsiders'.

Discourse and the idealized view of language

One major argument in this book is that in order to avoid explanations of social processes by having to refer to the attitudes, intentions or predispositions of social actors (that is to their inner states), while interested in how social reality is constructed through particular sets of social relations we should focus on discourse (see Knorr-Cetina 1981). This, in fact, has been called in post-structuralist theory 'the decentering' of the subject, which means rejecting the view that knowledge resides within the unified consciousness of a subject as ideological, and instead concentrating on the production of 'social meaning', in relation to power and knowledge.¹¹

¹¹Within this view the notion of the subject as having a fixed and stable identity is criticized as corresponding to the modernist notion originating in the enlightenment, when the social and natural world came to be viewed as objects of knowledge. This went together with attempts to ground knowledge in some transcendental subject, that is in a subject who could develop objective knowledge about the outside world and about the self. We see then that a narrative of human nature is being constructed in terms of the progressive achievement of specific Western institutions. Post-structuralism is highly critical of this view as it has served to obliterate other types of knowledge, say, in non-western, non institutionalized settings. It sees knowledge, or truth, not as given in nature but as culturally constructed. In effect, the humanist ideology of 'progress' is seen as legitimizing an alliance of science and power which is instrumental in subjecting people to a determinate regime of truth (see Foucault 1972, Bernstein 1983).

When using the notion of discourse we must keep in mind that something different is meant than simply language. The orthodox view of language as a unified linguistic body is unhelpful for social analysis as it conceives of language as little more than a vehicle for communication. In this line of thought the relationship between language and the social conditions in which it is employed becomes one of identifying the convergence between linguistic usages and specific social groups or speech communities. This, in effect, is a highly idealized view of language as it based on the assumption of 'speech communities' as homogeneous wholes. Hence issues of power concerning discursive practices by which certain groups of actors are excluded from a speech community are ignored (Hobart 1985).

Also problematic is the view that discourse can be studied without referring to the social context in which it appears. In this way the focus remains on the system of signification to the detriment of the ways in which social actors with different interests and cultural backgrounds exchange meanings within particular social contexts. The problem with this idealized view of language, in fact, is that it holds to a conception of language as referring to a reality existing outside the social (discursive) practices social actors are engaged in, thus conveying an image of language as an 'objective' and value free communicative tool. However, as Hall (1983:71) argues,

In language the same social relation can be differently represented and construed. And this is so ... because language by its nature is not fixed in a one to one relation to its referent but is 'multi-referential': it can construct different meaning around what is apparently the same social relation or phenomenon (Hall 1983: 71).

What is interesting to study then, is the various ways in which meaning is constructed. One way to to this is by studying how social actors engage in a variety of discursive practices.

Towards a non-intentionalist conception of strategy

It is possible to distinguish three ways in which the notion of strategy is used (Crow 1989). First, we can talk of a strategy in relation to the goals and preferences of a distinct set of individuals, as when talking about peasant survival strategies. This is the typical intentionalist usage of the concept of strategy, as it presupposes the existence of a category of subjects (in this case peasants) possessing well-defined social interests, reflected in actors' mental states (intentions, preferences), which they follow in attempting to gain access to given resources to achieve some predetermined goal (survival). This positivist usage of strategy does not allow for a notion of discursive practice, as it is enough to infer them and, in an objectivist fashion, to portray them as social facts. As such they are taken to explain farmer's behaviour.

Second, strategies can also be viewed in relation to some predefined social function, as when referring to social control strategies which a particular institution, or say a land-reform agency such as the IDA, may deploy. This is a non-intentionalist conception of strategy as it is not linked to the volition of particular subjects. However, in using this notion of strategy it is easy to fall into a kind of tautological thinking, that is, to read off from a given set of activities (i.e. cooperative training, extension, titling) some kind logic or function which may explain some presupposed outcome (i.e. subjecting the landless to an institutional regime which makes it impossible for them to pursue their rights to land), without delineating the precise social practices by which such an outcome (i.e. institutional incorporation) is achieved. In effect, this functional notion of strategy ascribes agency to some abstract mechanism. In avoiding such a usage of 'strategy' I discuss practices of social control (e.g. labelling) which are

exercized by particular social actors (front-line workers) in particular contexts (the administrative domain, the field domain).

The third usage of the notion of strategy refers to a particular conjunction of knowledge and social practice, which takes place within a determined social context. Thus we can talk about workplace strategies, or household strategies as embodying a stock of social knowledge necessary for carrying out activities which are central to the workplace, the household, or - as is in the case of this book - for dealing with state intervention. Such accomplishments, however, can only be seen as the outcome of strategies when analysed in the context of social struggles over the control of a given set of activities (a project) involving struggles over access to material or symbolic resources (authority). The capacity to control the access to particular resources, then, is crucial for securing the compliance and the participation of other actors in a given project - say the construction of a road, the establishment of a cooperative. Intervention-coping strategies are defined as consisting of modes of talking about the social interests, goals or preferences of a group or category of individuals, together with practices of securing the participation of other actors in the accomplishment of a given project. These I designate enrolment practices.

This, in short is a discursive conception of strategy, seen in terms of the capacity of social actors to accord local meaning to particular discourses with a view to enrolling other important actors within a particular project.¹²

Strategies and discursive practices

I distinguish three different types of discursive practice, or ways of talking about given problematics, prevailing in the relationship between settlers and the IDA: those of agricultural modernization (or production), community and democracy/citizenship. This is not to say that there are no other types of discursive practice which permeate state-peasant relations, but that these play a major role in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica. Discourse, as argued before, from an actor perspective, becomes interesting through its deployment in particular arenas of struggle. Arenas of struggle in the case studies are producers' (Chapter 6) or 'development organisations' (Chapter 7), or particular infrastructural projects (Chapter 7 and 8). Situated discursive practices, in short, can be seen as the activity by which notions of community, democracy and modernization are endowed with meaning, not in abstract, but in the context of specific local struggles and conflicts. The upshot is that a particular way of talking about interests (those of 'the community', 'the nation', 'the people') is fashioned which has strategic power.

Summarizing, localization of discourse, as I define it, does not yet define a strategy of intervention-coping, for a strategy in my view is more than a series of rhetorical skills. In addition to a language of interests it also includes tactical or practical knowledge of how to deal with state officials and agencies, and the necessary organisational skills for enrolling key actors in a given project. Finally it must be stressed that a strategy is no property of an individual, (although some individuals might be quite skilled in tailoring a given strategy to a particular situation). On the contrary, an intervention-coping strategy implies a locally-specific way of constructing state-peasant relations. The degree of success of an intervention-coping strategy depends on the capacity to enrol key actors.

¹²Bourdieu (1977) develops a notion of strategy as a way of countering the functionalist connotations of concepts such as rules and norms. This is clear when he writes about marriage strategies, which are culturally provided. I attempt to develop a concept of strategy which corresponds more to the idea of agency, that is, of the capacity of social actors to deal with a particular problematic, such as state intervention (see also Long 1990).

The remainder of this work focuses on three strategies of intervention-coping. In Chapter 6 I will show how a group of pro-IDA settlers establish preferential relationships with the institution, thereby reproducing forms of patron-client relationships which appear to be detrimental to the capacity of farmers' associations to develop viable modes of local level organisation. I will show that although this 'problematic' is recognised by all parties the prevailing (authoritarian) mode of intervention thwarts efforts by more independent farmers to establish less clientelistic relationships with the institution. Central to this chapter is how an authoritarian style of intervention gives way to gatekeeping strategies which in turn preclude the emergence of more 'participative' forms of local organisation.

Strategy	Localization of Discourse	Discursive Practices directed to	Type of Enrolment
accomodation gatekeeping <i>Neguev</i>	agricultural modernization	adapting to prevailing mode of intervention	front-line workers
distancing <i>Neguev</i>	agricultural mod. community	establishing new modes of cooperation with state agencies	potential beneficiaries
resistance <i>Macadamia</i>	democr/community	continuous negotiat. through politicizat.	all settlers
manipulation <i>La Isleta</i>	democr/community	taking advantage of local and institut. contradictions	front-line workers, settlers

Table 5.1 Intervention coping strategies in the different settlements

In Chapter 7 and 8 two activist strategies for dealing with state intervention are discussed, while the discourse of democracy/citizenship will be paramount to the ethnography. Chapter 7 focuses on a particularly direct type of state intervention in a settlement aiming at establishing law and order. Existing modes of local organisation there are labeled by the IDA administration as unlawful and subversive and are thus supplanted by a 'democratic' and peaceful local association. The resisting 'communist' peasant leader adopts an unconciliatory attitude, in the process compelling his rivals to

show that they have the full support of the Neguev regional office and that they are capable of improving upon the existing modes of local cooperation. In resisting state intervention he tests the ability and willingness of the officials to impose their own project, even in opposition to that of local actors. It depends on this test whether a majority of the settlement will be convinced of the advantage of participating in the IDA-supported association.

In Chapter 8 an aqueduct project is discussed which, although a remarkable feat, evolved into an arena of conflict between a variety of competing groups in a quite inaccessible settlement in the frontier. The various tactics of enrolment of settlers and state agencies by the competing factions will be discussed. It will be argued that these enrolment tactics, more than responding to the particular interests and conceptions of the rival groups, shaped the practical meanings of the notions of 'development' and 'community' as utilized by the actors involved in the struggles over the project.

In Table 5.1 the various strategies of intervention-coping are presented, together with the kind of discourse which are localized, the tactics used and the actors enrolled. It is not my purpose here to present a detailed review of the argument of the coming chapters. It will suffice to make the following comments. Central to this table is the relationship between the type of discourse that is drawn upon, the tactics which are used in establishing a particular relationship with the state bureaucracy and the actors which must be enrolled. However, such a relationship is not a mechanical one, it depends on the ability to develop a language for talking about the interests of farmers which can be used in negotiations with other beneficiaries and bureaucrats in the context of particular projects.

CHAPTER 6

STRATEGIES OF ACCOMODATION AND THE HISTORY OF INTERVENTION IN NEGUEV

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold: to reconstruct the history of the invasion of Neguev and the subsequent intervention by the IDA; and to document the effects of a particular kind of client-official interface upon the settlers' capacity to develop independent forms of local organization. It is argued that IDA intervention in Neguev led to the ascendancy of a group of 'loyalists' who maintained preferential relations with the IDA, and who took advantage of their position in order to develop as 'gatekeepers'. It is maintained that 'gatekeeping' had negative effects on the ability of the settler population to develop strong forms of local organisation.¹

The chapter discusses the different phases of the history of intervention and the O34 Programme: the invasion and its aftermath, the introduction and implementation of the O34 Programme, and the termination of the Programme. It begins with a discussion of the IDA's attempts to create a clientele in the Milano sector of Neguev in the course of its struggle with the peasant unions that organised the invasion of the Neguev *hacienda*. The second section of the chapter concentrates on gatekeeping in relation to the implementation of the O34 Programme. Third, an account is presented of the workings of gatekeeping as illustrated by the case of Oscar, a former UPAGRA

¹Here follows a short comment on the rationale of the approach chosen. I could have focused on 'resistance to intervention' rather than on accommodation strategies and thereby it would have been possible to show how IDA intervention led to the marginalization of large sectors of the settler population in Neguev, through practices of labelling. Yet, in such an analysis the role of certain groups of settlers in accomplishing the marginalization of radical settlers would have been left out. For it was precisely through an alliance between particular IDA officials and distinctive groups of settlers that such marginalization practices could occur. Marginalization, then, was not a direct outcome of labelling practices. As argued in chapter 3 labelling was more of a protective device for front-line workers than an effective weapon for securing the compliance of 'unruly clients'. If large sectors of the settler population were forced to comply with the conditions of state intervention, while having to bear its negative consequences, it was because alliances were forged between other groups of settlers - whom I designate gatekeepers - and IDA officials. It is my aim in this chapter to outline how these alliances came into being, and how they came to be questioned, not only by radical settler but also by others, more accomodative ones, who saw them as an obstacle.

supporter in the sector of La Lucha, who became an intermediary between the Regional Office and the settlers, while furthering his own personal and political interests. In the fourth and fifth sections of the chapter I discuss the Association of Small Producers of Neguev; its formation and the attempts to adapt it to the new policy of *agricultura de cambio* at the time that the O34 Programme ended (See for an account of agricultural policy in Costa Rica appendix 1).

6.2 The Invasion and its Aftermath

The struggle for land

The invasion of the Neguev *hacienda* was carried out in 1978 under the guidance of the UPAGRA peasant union after which a protracted struggle with the state followed. The squatters built huts and planted crops at the fringes of the forest in what is now officially called the Santa Rosa sector.² They were evicted several times and their huts and crops were burnt. The third time this happened a large group of squatters was jailed and taken to prison in Limón, the capital of Limón province. Only after UPAGRA organized a march to San José did the IDA decide to intervene and start negotiations with the owner of Neguev to purchase the *hacienda*. After the march, the decision was made by the UPAGRA invasion leaders to cross the Parismina river and start occupying other parts of the *hacienda*.

When UPAGRA finally reached an agreement with the IDA in 1979, the SPPAL union³ organized an invasion of parts of the Milano sector of the old *hacienda*, something which the UPAGRA leaders interpreted as an act of enmity. UPAGRA, after learning that SPPAL had invaded these lands, advanced via the Bellavista forest side and the El Peje sector towards Milano, distributing as much land as possible. Subsequently, an accord was reached between the two peasant organisations and it was agreed that a huge hedge would be built with a view to separating their areas of influence.

Soon after the invasion, the SPPAL Squatter Committee lost much of its force, especially after they lost a struggle with the IDA over the latter's decision to reduce the size of the plots from 17 to 10 has. It is said that the SPPAL leaders lacked the discipline of their UPAGRA counterparts and stories abound about their favouritism in distributing plots.⁴ Later, when SPPAL supporters realized that the union could not

²Local people call the sector La Lucha (the struggle) instead of Santa Rosa, as it is the place where the invasion started.

³The SPPAL (*Sindicato de Pequeños Productores del Atlántico*) was at the time the largest peasant union in the area and benefitted from the organisational resources of Vanguardia Popular, the communist party. In the beginning of the 1970s it had organised the invasions of a number of neglected 'haciendas', (such as Tierragrande which will be discussed later). At the end of the 1970s, however, it was considered as a reformist organisation, seeking to expand its political base in the Atlantic zone for electoral purposes. More radical unions, such as UPAGRA, very much resented this policy and accused them of organising land invasions for clientelistic reasons, and of engaging in negotiations with other political parties and large landholders. In effect, the invasion of Neguev was a bold action in this context, and UPAGRA saw it as an expression of utter opportunism when the SPPAL started invading 'their' territory from the other, more accessible side.

⁴The two principal leaders of SPPAL were brothers of a communist MP who specialized in carrying out land invasions. Apparently, these brothers were more interested in the monetary benefits of invading landholdings than in the political struggle. Thus many stories circulate about them speculating in land. Interestingly, this led to a clash with their ideologically more committed MP brother.

maintain a stand against the IDA, many sought for accommodations with the institution.

A major point of conflict in the negotiations between the IDA and the Squatters' Committees was the distribution of provisional land titles. Squatters lacked any legal right to the land that was allotted to them by the peasant unions until they had received titles from the IDA. The IDA, however, insisted that the squatters should pass a detailed beneficiary selection system. IDA officials argued that this was necessary in order to avoid professional squatters and people who already possessed land in other areas from being allotted land. UPAGRA, however, accused the IDA of using this argument for postponing the distribution of land titles, compelling them to leave their plots, since without such titles no applications for bank credit could be made. It was more than a year before the titles were distributed by IDA officials.

This situation led to a number of incidents which enhanced the feeling of IDA functionaries that they were dealing with a particularly explosive, if not subversive situation. One such incident made a strong impression on them. A car with officials once went to the settlement and was confronted by an angry crowd demanding that they immediately be allotted with the promised provisional property titles. The crowd sequestered the officials for a whole day until they received the assurance from IDA's President that the distribution of titles would take place as rapidly as possible. In the meantime the officials spent a frightening time as they faced threats that they would be thrown into the river, car and all.

Establishment of a Settlers' Committee: the rise of the loyalists

IDA's presence became permanent in 1979 through the arrival of two *agraristas*. Among other things, these two gave references to settlers with which they could apply for bank credit. They also supervised the establishment of a Settlers' Committee which aimed at combatting the influence of UPAGRA in the settlement. This committee consisted of ex-SPPAL supporters and newcomers who had been selected by the *agraristas*. *Agraristas* and members of the committee used to travel to El Silencio and El Peje, which were UPAGRA strongholds, to convince the squatters that the IDA was working for their benefit. In addition, the Settlers Committee met to discuss issues related to whether settlers could classify as IDA beneficiaries or not. There was a period when these meetings were attended by more than 90 persons. At the meetings the *agrarista* would propose the names of settler candidates and the people would comment on whether these people had properties elsewhere. But also much emphasis was placed on whether they were known as peaceful and "democratic" elements. In this way an alliance between *agraristas* and 'loyalists' was formed in order to exclude leftist groups from the day-to-day affairs of institution-client relationships.

Most members of this committee were settlers from the Milano sector. Milano is the most accessible part of the settlement, with fertile grasslands. It was there that the former *hacienda* house was located and where the IDA established its offices. In Bellavista, El Silencio and El Peje, land had less value than in Milano. As a consequence, little land was sold in these poorer sectors for speculation purposes. In contrast, in Milano a lively land market came into being. Within a period of five years half the plots (50 out of 97) there changed owner. Newcomers in Milano were often people with savings who had no relationship with UPAGRA. In effect, most of these newcomers became loyalists. It is no surprise then that Milano became a stronghold of IDA as the *agraristas* made sure that new beneficiaries had no red sympathies, let alone connections with UPAGRA. It must be said that the Settlers' Committee did not

accomplish much in the way of 'development' activities. It functioned more as an instrument for recruiting settlers with a compliant attitude. In fact, the Settlers' Committee established by the IDA consisted of individuals loyal to the institution. In order to 'normalize' the situation in Neguev, the *agraristas* had two instruments. First, that of providing bank credit recommendations for 'trustworthy' settlers. Second, creating a selection mechanism to ensure that new settlers would not sympathize with 'subversive' groups. They had been fairly successful in Milano and had made some inroads into the other sectors of the settlement, though UPAGRA retained much influence in El Peje and El Silencio sectors where the quality of land and roads were worse, and in Bellavista and La Lucha, sites from which the invasion was started. This continuous struggle for the allegiance of the settler populations between the IDA and UPAGRA lasted for more than two years (1979-1981). Settlers would tell me that one day UPAGRA leaders would hold a meeting at the *pulpería* (a small shop) warning them not to trust the IDA, and the next day the IDA *agraristas* and pro-IDA settlers would appear to inform the settlers about the coming changes with the introduction of the O34 Programme. On the other hand, UPAGRA and other radical settlers accused the 'loyalists' of being land speculators, and even worse, of being IDA spies and traitors to the 'peasant class'.

The 'loyalists' of the Settlers' Committee were quite close, as many of them were relatives and with the exception of one family, were all migrants from the West Coast. As argued, the Settlers' Committee played a pivotal role in fighting UPAGRA. One important action they undertook was to impede UPAGRA from establishing a maize collecting centre in Milano, which provided the best location, even though UPAGRA had signed an agreement with the Marketing Board, the CNP, in which it was stipulated that UPAGRA together with the CNP would take responsibility for the marketing of maize. This agreement was interpreted by the IDA functionaries as undermining their authority, and they consequently took measures to curtail UPAGRA's power and ambitions. The pro-IDA Settlers' Committee filed a complaint with the authorities against UPAGRA for encroaching upon their prerogatives. It accused UPAGRA of coercing the settler population to participate in undemocratic organisations, and of misrepresenting the wishes of the population while engaging in political negotiations with government institutions such as the CNP. The IDA, in turn, used this as an excuse to ask for police action. More than 150 policemen were sent in to stop a handful of UPAGRA people who came, largely from the other sectors (El Peje, El Silencio, Bellavista and La Lucha), to defend 'their' collection centre. This was a dramatic event, as for the first time UPAGRA leaders were forced to negotiate with IDA functionaries at gunpoint.⁴

In 1980, UPAGRA members were accused of having fire arms in their plots and of organising military training and other subversive activities.⁵ UPAGRA then demanded that an official investigation be established in order to disclose the facts. When a Congressional Commission arrived in Neguev to investigate the supposed subversive activities, the accusations were withdrawn as no evidence was found for their existence. In addition the Congressional Commission proposed a number of

⁴This was morally a very disruptive event as different groups of settlers were set against each other. Most of the settlers who acted against their UPAGRA *compañeros* later distanced themselves from this action. Interestingly, some of these settlers became heavily involved in evangelical churches, avoiding involvement ever again in political activity, whether on the side of UPAGRA or IDA.

⁵Two ex-UPAGRA leaders were found willing to bear witness to these subversive activities. One of them would play a major role later in La Lucha. Another one was a Colombian, already suspected of being an agent of the intelligence police by UPAGRA people, as he had been offering his services as an 'experienced guerrilla leader' to the UPAGRA leaders who had led the invasion.

measures for improving the relationship between the IDA and all groups of settlers, especially UPAGRA followers. One major recommendation issued by this Commission was the establishment of Coordination Committees in each settlement sector which should include representatives of the IDA, UPAGRA and 'independent' settlers (or loyalists). It did not take long before UPAGRA retreated from these Coordination Committees as they were seen as IDA instruments for manipulating the settler's demands. The Committees, then, also became arenas of accommodation between loyalists and IDA officials.

With the introduction of Credit and the Agricultural Development Programmes in 1982 the IDA office in the settlement expanded, as several *técnicos* and a formal Settlement Head arrived. This was a watershed in the history of state-peasant relations in Neguev. So far, only the *agraristas* had been in charge of fighting the UPAGRA influence.

6.3 The Introduction of the O34 Programme

Institution-client relationships change

The O34 Programme signalled a dramatic change in the relationship between all settlers and the IDA, as easy credit became available to whomsoever was ready to comply with the authority of the IDA, and thus also to UPAGRA sympathisers. In addition, roads were built to the most inaccessible parts of the settlement.⁶ One result of this massive state-intervention was that less importance was given to the Coordination Committees. Instead a much more powerful weapon for gaining the allegiance of the settlers had arrived: large amounts of credit in combination with roads. Bank credit, as argued, had been provided to settlers by way of the recommendations of the *agraristas*, but had so far been in short supply.

The new Settlement Head (Fernando Campos) did not take the Coordination Committees meetings seriously. During his term minutes were no longer written of the meetings and thus in the absence of written agreements, failures to carry out agreements could not be sanctioned. A decision was therefore made to stop the meetings. In the opinion of the IDA loyalists to whom I spoke this was fatal for the settlement. Projects aimed to establish sewage systems were not implemented. But Fernando Campos had little confidence in settler organizations. He once made it clear at a meeting that it was his, and not the Coordination Committees' right to determine what was best for the settlement. From then on, no communal organizations functioned.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Fernando Campos was aware of the paternalist character of the relationship between the 'loyalists' and IDA functionaries, and of the tendency of 'loyalists' to take advantage of local forms of organisation in order to get jobs at the institution (as painters, shopkeepers, etc), and to become the first beneficiaries of IDA programmes. In addition it appeared that the loyalists lay special claims to institutional resources such as credit, housing plots, the use of tractors, etc. Fernando Campos took up a consequent position entailing that the IDA should avoid

⁶This was one reason for the very high level of expenditure of the O34 Programme, since access to an all-weather road existed for each farm; an astonishing situation in view of the fact that whole sectors of the settlement (El Peje and El Silencio) had soils not suited for agriculture. Such a concentration of vital infrastructure in Neguev makes a sharp contrast with the situation in other settlements where such infrastructure is minimal (see chapters 7 and 8).

entering any kind of negotiations with either pro or anti-IDA settlers. This, as we will see later, did not mean that the influence of the 'loyalists' was terminated, since they were able to establish 'special' relationships with front-line workers (and as we will see, with the Settlement Head himself), and thereby to engage in gatekeeping activities.

Meanwhile, the skirmishes between the IDA and UPAGRA continued, but UPAGRA was drawn into a defensive position.⁷ Although UPAGRA leaders continued their meetings, only those settlers who for one reason or another were not eligible for credit (often settlers on the worst lands) appeared to be receptive to UPAGRA's message. UPAGRA leaders then, were effectively marginalized. They were able to organise their come-back only years later, after 1985, when it appeared that a majority of those who had received loans were heavily indebted and unable to sustain a livelihood from farming. Henceforth, UPAGRA again could expand its constituency amongst those who suffered most from indebtedness.

The implementation of the O34 Programme

As commented before, the new style of intervention heralded by the O34 Programme entailed a different kind of client-official interface, one which was grounded in working with individual 'clients' rather than dealing with groups of beneficiaries. The *agraristas* and the social workers were joined by a group of *técnicos* and credit officials who played a major role in the implementation of the O34 Programme. From then onwards it was the *técnicos* who established the closest relationship with settlers as they were in charge of selecting the beneficiaries for their programmes. The Credit Fund officials, in turn, were in charge of investigating the beneficiaries' solvency. Credit was easily available from the beginning of the O34 Programme, although when it became clear that credit recovery would be difficult, more and more restrictions were built into its distribution.⁸ The O34 Programme as a whole was a failure, but some programmes left a deeper imprint on the beneficiaries than others. In what follows a short account of the various programmes implemented through the O34 Programme is presented.

The major goal of the O34 Programme was defined in the project paper as follows: "to develop lower cost, more effective mechanisms for establishing productive, profitable, and environmentally sound *campesino* farms on former *latifundios*" (see project paper agrarian settlement and productivity). This implied that farm production should be diversified and that tree perennials such as cocoa, peñibaye, and root crops should become the mainstay of the farmer economy, at the expense of annual crops such as maize.

Maize remained the most widespread crop, being at the same time the crop with least risks. Yet, maize could not be grown profitably for long periods except on the best soils, near to the rivers, while one of the aims of the O34 Programme was that of substituting maize by non-traditional crops. By 1985, 500 hectares had been planted with maize, 133 hectares with root crops, and 60 hectares with cocoa. Most land, however, was under pasture. The first programme failure occurred in 1983 when

⁷Even UPAGRA leaders opted to accommodate to the new situation, and after some reticence also applied for credit from the O34 Programme. But they continued to criticize the way the O34 Programme was implemented, the lack of settler participation, and the 'hidden agendas' underlying state intervention.

⁸This is the best kept secret of the O34-programme. A report showing that credit-recovery was less than 40% was censured by the USAID consultant (personal communication by official from IDA's project evaluation office).

cassave producers were unable to sell their product for a price high enough to cover the costs of harvesting, while some farmers sold to a firm that went bankrupt and never paid them. Great expectations existed for cocoa which according to the programme planners should have become the principal source of income for the farmers. But yields remained so low that settlers could not even repay the interest. Other agricultural development programmes such as tubers and coconuts dealt with serious marketing problems. *Pejibaye* (peach palm), was not planted on a large scale due to doubts regarding marketing.

Of all the programmes, that of animal husbandry was the most expensive. Yet, since its inception there existed doubts about the economic viability and environmental desirability of this programme. Finally, the most successful agricultural programme, that of chili, was the result of the personal initiative of the técnico Samuel Lozano in collaboration with a group of settlers.

In order to obtain an idea of the credit and extension coverage in the settlement the following figures are interesting.⁹

	number	percentage
no credit	153	49
credit for one programme	93	30
credit for two programmes	51	16
credit for three programmes	11	3
credit for four programmes	5	2
total	313	100

Table 6.1 Distribution of credit for agricultural programmes among farms in Neguev
Source: técnicos of Neguev, July 1986.

	number	percentage
no extension	32	20
animal husbandry	38	24
coconut	7	4
pejibaye	8	5
maize	28	17
medicinal plants	14	9
tubers	9	6
cocoa	24	15
total	160	100

Table 6.2 Extension provided to credit recipients according to agricultural programme
Source: técnicos of Neguev, July 1986.

⁹These figures do not include the chili programme, which at the time - middle of 1986 - was in preparation. The new agricultural programmes of pineapple and *maracuya*, which were not funded by IDA's Credit Fund, were also not included.

The failure to establish a Farm Planning Unit

Originally the intention was to provide credit and extension in such a way that it would adjust to the individual possibilities of the farmer, his family and his plot, through the design of individual farm development plans. The idea was that a specialized Farm Planning Unit, composed by experienced agronomists, would design cultivation plans for individual farmers indicating the crops that were suited for the soils of his plot, in accordance with the amount and type of family labour available and that would permit the family to repay the credit while being able to live off the farm. In this way, it was expected that individual families would be able to make the shift from 'traditional' farmers producing largely for their own consumption to commercial farmers. It must be noted that within this approach no allowance was made for the establishment of farmers' organisations, whether based on crop programmes or locality. The farmer was expected to make his decisions on the basis of the cultivation plan designed for him and after consultations with the *técnicos*, who were responsible for the agronomic viability, and the Credit Fund officials who were in charge of the financial viability.

Yet the Farm Planning Unit was never established and the cultivation plans were never designed due to the fact that programme implementation was running two years behind schedule and that the loans had to be extended as rapidly as possible¹⁰. As a result, the *técnicos* became responsible for the design and implementation of the agricultural programmes.

Client-official interface changes: combatting political clientelism

It is not surprising, then, that implementation became a quite personal issue between individual *técnicos*, who wielded considerable discretion in selecting beneficiaries, and the farmers. The *técnicos*, mostly young and inexperienced, carried the burden of dealing with settlers who were considered troublesome, and were glad to offer loans to individuals they trusted. Furthermore, they would follow the policy of Fernando Campos, the Settlement Head, of demanding from 'less trustworthy' settlers that they keep far from radical activities. Also the Credit Fund officials, when assessing the beneficiaries' financial viability, took into consideration their willingness to become 'responsible and entrepreneurial farmers'. Since credit was in large supply, both *técnicos* and Credit Fund Officials did little more than administer the extension of credit. Of the original plan of dovetailing credit to the possibilities of the farmer, little was upheld.

As argued, forms of cooperation between beneficiaries of one and the same programme were discouraged. Inasmuch cooperation existed it was the result of the initiative of individual farmers, but it was surprisingly limited. Even for a large programme such as cocoa, which at one time included almost fifty beneficiaries, no attempts were made to establish a farmers' organisation. Problems concerning extension and repayment were dealt with by the *técnicos* and the Credit Fund officials with individual beneficiaries. Any attempt to deal with such a problem by an organised group was viewed as potentially subversive by the Settlement Head. This type of client-official interface in which forms of local organisation were strongly disheartened was broken when the Association of Small Producers was created and towards the end of the O34 Programme, the chili programme gave rise to a form of production-oriented local organisation.

Interestingly these figures suggest that by 1986 only about half the farms of Neguev were receiving credit or extension. Of the rest different types of farmers can be

¹⁰See Chapter 2 for an analysis of the institutional struggles causing this delay in programme implementation.

distinguished. Some had poor soils and no pasture, others were 'troublesome' settlers who had never received credit, or who after having received credit for maize had not been able to gain the trust of a *técnico* to be included in one of the larger programmes; others were newcomers who bought their farms after the Credit Fund had stopped distributing new loans for livestock¹¹ and who had little interest in crops, and some farmers (about 30) had been written off by the Credit Fund and were subject to legal prosecution. At the same time, a large proportion of the farmers, that is, most of the beneficiaries of the animal husbandry, cocoa, and coconut programmes received no income from these activities. Summarizing, it can be said that the situation for the large majority of farmers in Neguev by 1986 was rather critical.

This situation led to much dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the IDA, also on the part of settlers who had turned their backs against radical organisations such as UPAGRA, or who had never had a radical attitude. Fernando Campos certainly had good reasons to distrust independent forms of organisation among indebted settlers. In fact, he refused to negotiate with a committee of settlers, which with the support of UPAGRA, demanded a renegotiation of the debts.

From 1987 onwards UPAGRA leaders remained active within the Renegotiation Committee and were convening meetings which were attended by increasingly larger groups of settlers (more than 40). They would also question the 'corrupt' role of the gatekeepers and the lack of responsibility of the front-line workers. They argued that the O34 Programme had been part of a conspiracy by USAID and the IDA to weaken combative forms of communal organisation, such as the Squatters' Committee, through the use of credit, and by offering the settlers credits which they could not repay, and thus forcing them to sell their plots to middle-class people, or those who at any rate did not belong to the 'peasant class'. UPAGRA leaders still enjoyed a high degree of respect among settlers and therefore were feared by front-line workers. They would occasionally appear at meetings organized by front-line workers for training purposes, something the latter were afraid of. In Chapter 4 a few examples were given of encounters between front-line workers and UPAGRA leaders that caused anxiety among the former. In effect, the radicals were capable of using the discourse of community in their criticisms against the way in which the O34 Programme was implemented.

The alliance between gatekeepers and front-line workers

The front-line workers, then, had to rely in their day-to-day affairs in the settlement on a restricted number of loyalists, or gatekeepers, with whom they had established good relationships over the years, and who received preferential treatment in the adjudication of plots, the renegotiation of old credits, in the introduction of new agricultural programmes, etc. They were also the first ones to benefit from small aid programmes (such as Food AID) and showed their compliance to the *técnicos* by participating in training activities (*días de campo*).

In addition the gatekeepers - in total some 15 families - participated in a range of committees, such as the Housing Committees in the population centres which had to deal with the distribution of plots, and the construction of a sewage system, in the Educational Board, etc., and in this way they were involved in stopping the influence of radical elements. Indeed, the gatekeepers presented themselves as the spokesmen of

¹¹Loans for livestock were the most desired by newcomers. But by 1986 the animal husbandry programme was already in disarray and since there was no credit recovery, credit delivery was stopped. Many newcomers, it must be noted, were part-time farmers who were interesting in investing in land, and who either derived an income from other entrepreneurial activities or wage employment.

the settlers in Neguev, at a time when no local organisations were functioning. They were always present at any ceremony or institutional activity, for instance when a congressman or the Minister of Agriculture visited the settlement. On such ceremonies they were always ready to thank the IDA for what it had done for the settlers.

In their dealings with other settlers the gatekeepers always stressed the necessity of 'cooperating' with the IDA functionaries by following the recommendations of the *técnicos*, and refusing to be involved with 'non-democratic' organisations. At the same time they were always complaining to the officials that it was always a small group of people who were ready to take up responsibilities in communal organisations. They also complained about the lack of interest by most farmers in finding constructive solutions for the production problems of the settlement, and of the danger that 'non-democratic' organisations such as UPAGRA could channel the apathy of the majority of settlers in a way that was contrary to the interests of the IDA. In effect, the gatekeepers were better in establishing close relationships with front-line workers than they were with fellow settlers.

It can be said, then, that the O34 Programme was successful in depoliticizing the institution-client relationship, but given the lack of local forms of organisation that were representative for wider sectors of the settlement population, it stimulated the appearance of a group of settlers who monopolized the relationship with the IDA, in a kind of interface which can be characterized as 'bureaucratic clientelism'.

Next I discuss how a former UPAGRA member turned into a loyalist and then a gatekeeper. This case is particularly interesting as it illustrates how 'gatekeeping' becomes a problem for the wider community.

6.4 Gatekeeping in La Lucha: the Case of Oscar

It has been argued that gatekeeping arose as the result of IDA's attempt to introduce a different kind of institution-client relationship in which politics would not play a role in programme implementation. Within this model the beneficiary was treated as a client and goods and services were provided on an individual basis. Attempts to establish local modes of organisation were viewed with a high degree of distrust by the Regional Office. However, in order to carry out their work it was necessary for front-line workers to establish strong connections with particular 'trustworthy' settlers. Gatekeepers, in short, were those settlers who were able and willing to conform to the prevailing implementation model, while playing an active role in the IDA's attempts to marginalize UPAGRA followers. This, however, had effects which were not intended by the Regional Office, as some gatekeepers were able to establish positions of intermediation which were experienced as highly detrimental by the community at large. In this section a case is presented of a gatekeeper who uses his relationship with the Settlement Head in order to pursue his personal and political ambitions. In the process he acquired so much influence that his power had to be curtailed by the Regional Office.

Oscar, a former foreman in a banana plantation in Jiménez, was recruited by an UPAGRA leader who knew of his organization abilities and who offered him a plot in the settlement. This was in 1978 after the invasion of Neguev had taken place. He became a member of the UPAGRA Squatters' Committee, but soon he was thrown out of the organisation because of corrupt practices.

The way in which Oscar managed to obtain a better plot was considered as a turning point in the struggle between UPAGRA and the IDA. Initially Oscar had been

assigned a plot by UPAGRA in the Bellavista sector. However, he preferred to have it in the central part of La Lucha, nearer to the main road to the village of Río Jiménez, where he had formerly lived. This last plot belonged to someone who did not qualify according to the IDA, so the UPAGRA Squatters' Committee had then assigned it to a young settler. But Oscar, who had already left UPAGRA, negotiated permission from the IDA to settle on the plot and threw the young settler out. The story goes that he struck him on the street in front of every one. This caused quite a stir among the settlers, especially in view of the fact that it was the UPAGRA Squatters' Committee that had assigned this plot to the young settler.¹²

Finally the UPAGRA people decided to leave the situation as it was, especially as it appeared that Oscar had the total trust of Fernando Campos, the Settlement Head. In effect, the latter saw Oscar as the only person with the rhetoric and organisational skills necessary to break the influence of UPAGRA in La Lucha. This had been proved in his willingness to confront the Squatter's Committee head-on. Thus Oscar played an important role in preparing the settlers in La Lucha for the arrival of the O34 Programme by making it clear to them that if they wanted to apply for credit they should 'prove' that they were peaceful and compliant people, and by setting up a Settlers' Committee which was recognized by the IDA.

Fernando Campos relied on Oscar's accounts of the progress made in eradicating the influence of the *Upagristas* in local forms of organisation such as the UPAGRA Squatters' Committee. Oscar was also asked to carry out tasks which enhanced his role as intermediary, such as that of making lists of settlers who lost their maize crop during the recurrent inundations, and who could claim compensation for the damages, etc. In addition Oscar was employed by the IDA and put in charge of their road construction programme in La Lucha, and in that capacity he could offer jobs to settlers who had no monetary income whatsoever. Another source of income for Oscar was a path constructed by the IDA which crossed his plot. This was the only possible entry to a riverbank where sand could be collected for construction purposes. Although he was legally obliged to let people pass through the plot to gather sand, Oscar charged money for it. It is not surprising, then, that Oscar became a very powerful person as he could present himself as the local representative of the Settlement Head.

Oscar played a leading role in setting up a Settlers' Committee (*comité de parceleros*) which was loyal to the IDA. This committee was founded in 1979 and functioned for two years. However, soon after the formation of this committee, most members started to distrust Oscar as it appeared that he was selling timber from what would become the communal plot, without rendering any accounts or profit to the committee. As a result the other members of the Settlers' Committee decided to distance themselves from him. The treasurer of the committee, for instance, had a clash with Oscar about his pocketing the proceeds from the timber sale. When questioned Oscar answered that he had no need to answer to anyone except the IDA.

¹²It is important to note that the beneficiary selection process shortly after the invasion took place as follows: UPAGRA would come with a list of people - who were factually in possession of the land - and the IDA would investigate whether they fulfilled the conditions. In general this caused no problems, as UPAGRA people ensured themselves that the squatters were landless and had not sold land in other settlements. The incident with Oscar, in fact, was a rupture with this procedure.

Gatekeeping comes under fire

Oscar became the main representative in La Lucha of the Coordination Committee which was established in 1982 in order to normalize the relationships between the IDA and the settlers. In addition, Oscar derived much power from the importance Fernando Campos gave to his advice regarding the allocation of plots to particular persons. It is also said that Oscar earned a lot by offering to act as an intermediary between settlers who wanted to sell their plots and the Settlement Office. In the meantime a market for land came into being in La Lucha which stimulated settlers to sell their land. In this way, settlers were attracted to the settlement who had no obligations vis-à-vis UPAGRA.

A particular incident acquired much importance in La Lucha as it questioned the legitimacy of Oscar's power, and hence of gatekeeping in La Lucha. This incident had to do with an abandoned plot which the Board of Education of the La Lucha school wanted to use to cultivate crops to finance school activities. After a formal request to the Settlement Head by the Board of the school, the *agrarista* notified them at a meeting that Fernando Campos had agreed to allocate the plot to the school to generate funds. Thereafter, members of the Board started to grow maize on the plot. However, Oscar was against the idea since Juan José, a leading UPAGRA leader, played a pivotal role on the Board. Fernando Campos agreed with Oscar that UPAGRA should not be given the chance to gain control of a communal plot through the Board of Education. Oscar had a clear idea of what to do with the plot, he settled a woman on it with whom he had a love affair. After the *agrarista* revoked Fernando Campos' decision, the woman proceeded to plant maize on those parts that had been already cleared by the members of the Board.

The Board then demanded that a meeting be convened with the *agrarista* and Fernando Campos in order to straighten things out. Fernando and the *agrarista* declared that a decision had never been made to allocate the plot to the Board of Education. Indignant about this injustice the members of the Board decided to harvest the woman's maize and to use the revenue for the purchase of school material, although they were aware that this was an illegal action and that they could be put in jail for it. Altogether there were more than 40 farmers who participated in the harvesting. Among them was a member of the UPAGRA Squatters' Committee, Juan José.

Upon hearing this Oscar became furious and urged the woman to sue. They were all summoned to go to the court in Guácimo and it was Juan José who confronted Fernando Campos there when the latter accused them of being thieves and communists. Later, Juan José reassured many settlers by declaring that if they were put in jail UPAGRA would start a political campaign for their release. In the face of the determination of the settlers of La Lucha, Fernando Campos decided not to act, thus in fact respecting the first decision to allocate the plot to the Education Board.

This incident was also important to the front-line workers since it showed the dangers of working with intermediaries such as Oscar who could take advantage of their position, and create highly conflictive situations. Eventually, Oscar was left out of any decision regarding the distribution of credit.

This did not mean, however, that Oscar played no role in the settlement any more. Oscar was politically active in the oppositional *Unidad* party as an active campaigner. He therefore maintained excellent relationships with the congressman of that party in the Limón Province. Besides being engaged in local party politics, he spent much energy on the local football team, receiving a subsidy which covered part of the costs. Thereafter, he became involved in the invasion of an abandoned landholding of about 200 hectares adjoining Neguev and asked a few poor settlers in La Lucha to participate. After the invasion was recognized by the IDA he started negotiating with a

company that was interested in buying the land. Then Oscar, who had been earning a lot of money by offering his services as an intermediary to the squatters, employed a lawyer and summoned the squatters to leave the *finca* on the grounds that he was the legal owner. In return, he offered the squatters a small compensation. The squatters then asked UPAGRA for assistance. Fortunately for the squatters, the UPAGRA lawyer was able to invalidate the transaction between Oscar and the company interested in the land.

Finally, Oscar made attempts to establish a Housing Committee in La Lucha in order to apply for subsidies from a Rural Housing Programme promoted by the government. To that end he ensured the support of an influential person in La Lucha, the preacher of an expanding evangelical church. In addition, he asked for additional funds from his friend the MP of *Unidad*. In this way Oscar was preparing his come-back in La Lucha.

This attempt to regain influence had to be stopped by a concerted effort of the social worker, the *agrarista* and the members of a new Development Committee formed with the assistance of the IDA. Indeed, the fear existed that Oscar would use the Housing Programme to extort money from the settlers, while pressurizing them to vote for *Unidad*. In the future, attempts by Oscar and others to engage in forms of political clientelism were actively combatted by the IDA front-line workers.

Next I discuss the functioning of gatekeeping in relation to the Association of Small Producers.

6.5 The Association of Small Producers

In this section I argue that the absence of any kind of local organisation was a major reason for the failure of the Agricultural Development Programmes, and that the IDA administrators realized the necessity of promoting farmers' organisations. This will be shown by focussing on the creation and further evolution of the Association of Small Producers in Neguev. It will be shown that gatekeeping as the product of an intervention style which was intent on obliterating forms of political negotiation, subsequently became an obstacle for the implementation of the 034 Programme itself. Association. This, in fact, was the irony of the 034 Programme: that it substituted forms of 'political clientelism' in which negotiations between groups of farmers and institutional leaders, by a form of 'bureaucratic clientelism' which was characterized by a relationship of mutual dependence between gatekeepers and front-line workers.

The failure of the Animal husbandry programme

The largest agricultural development programme in the whole of Neguev was the animal husbandry one, both in terms of number of beneficiaries and in terms of loans per beneficiary. This programme consisted of a dairy livestock and a beef cattle component. Here I will dwell on the reasons for the failure of the largest component, the dairy livestock.

As noted before, at the beginning of the programme there existed doubts concerning the financial viability of a dairying programme in the Neguev. The animals bought were unable to deliver the expected yields unless they were fed with high-quality grass. In brief, little thought was given by IDA planners to the quality of

pastures until the damage was done¹³. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the milk-processing companies Borden and Dos Pinos improved their quality standards and started rejecting milk from all over the Atlantic zone. In addition the price of cattle plummeted in 1983-84. This was a blow for many settlers who were unable to pay the interests on loans. Thus many were forced to sell their cattle assets in order to pay the interests on those same assets. It need not be said that this became a source of enormous disaffection vis-à-vis the IDA.

It is important to note, however, that all parties (also many UPAGRA leaders) agreed that the fault of the failure of the programme was not only the IDA's, since there was also an element of personal responsibility. There was much cheating in the purchase of cattle¹⁴. For instance many bought low-quality animals while claiming the money for good quality cattle and pocketing the difference. Others started selling cattle in order to live, while failing to pay the interest. A common story is that some just spent the money in the canteens. UPAGRA followers capitalized on these errors by inciting the people not to repay their debts. They argued that the credit was a present given by USAID to the IDA and thus the IDA was exploiting the peasants by demanding that the money be returned. In fact, one argument recurrently used against the institution was that credit had been provided at an interest rate of 15% whereas it was known that USAID charged only 4%. As noted before, *Upagristas* contended that these programmes were set up with the conscious intention by the IDA of creating a large degree of indebtedness among settlers, so as to force them to sell their plots.¹⁵ In view of the threatening disaster of the animal programme the Settlement Head had decided that some form of local organization might be necessary to salvage it, and consequently the Association of Small Producers was created.

The formation of the Association of Small Producers

The Association of Small Producers was established in 1985 on the initiative of Virgilio Ramírez, a sociologist who was responsible for the Training and Education Unit in Neguev, and the veterinary officer Felipe González establishing a collection centre. The most important lines of activity were securing funds for a cooling plant and the introduction of a control system whereby milk from sick cows could be refused. Initiatives were made to raise funds from the Canadian and the German Embassies.

¹³This was the view of Hugo Paz who was employed by IDA to rescue the dairying programme. Hugo Paz, who was a dairy cattle specialist and Felipe Gonzales, the veterinary, had different opinions on the reasons for the failure. The latter criticized Hugo Paz for recommending expensive concentrates for the cattle. In his view, large yields could never be attained under the non-technified conditions existing at that time in Neguev. The result was increased indebtedness. In his view the collapse of the market did the rest. Hugo Paz, who had participated in a specialized programme of dairy production under small farm conditions in the northern area of Rio Frio in the Atlantic zone, blamed the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture for deciding to give priority to the highlands as a dairy production area. He argued that with the necessary investment, infrastructural support and initial subsidies, the Atlantic zone could, in the middle to long term, produce in a more cost-effective way than the *meseta central*. However, this decision was not made for the fear of estranging the politically influential highland dairy producers (see for the political underpinnings of agricultural policy Annis, 1987).

¹⁴According to the veterinary, control was not only impossible but he was not expected to be too stringent in assessing the purchase of cattle, for the money had to be spent as rapidly as possible.

¹⁵A loyalist with whom I discussed the history of intervention had a less conspiratory view. He argued that the failure of the agricultural programmes was due to a combination of ignorance, negligence by the *técnicos* as well as the settlers, and a lack of thought given to the absence of markets for these products.

Membership was open to all beneficiaries of the dairy livestock programme, but in reality only a small group of beneficiaries participated.

The founders of the Association, twelve in all, were close neighbours. They maintained an excellent relationship with Felipe Gonzáles and had been involved in the animal husbandry programme from the beginning. They were viewed by most front-line workers as 'loyalists'. They were known by the social worker and the *agrarista* as 'responsible characters', who were ready to seek 'constructive solutions' to communal problems. In any case neither the *técnicos*, the *agrarista* nor the sociologist needed to fear that the founders of the Association would indulge in forms of public criticism against them and the IDA.

As a group, the 12 founders of the Association had much in common. Some were traders and others were small artisans. It was common for most to combine activities in the settlement with businesses or jobs outside. And a few would have their families in neighbouring villages or in San José. For one thing, they were not as committed to farming as they made the IDA officials believe. Yet, they were able to play an important role in programme implementation through their close relationship to some front-line workers and their involvement in the Association. Accordingly, they remained points of reference and important allies in day-to-day service delivery tasks. As they acquired rights and developed skills in voicing settlers' needs they were considered a part of the institution by many settlers, and by some they were called "the apple of IDA's eye".

Five of these former 'loyalists' formed the Board of the Association. It was never clear to me what the precise number of members of the Association was, although the President of the Board claimed that all the thirty beneficiaries of the dairy programme were members.

I remember that Mario Green, the social worker, once referred to Rafael, the President, and Nicolás, the Vice-President of the Association, as 'volatile' communal leaders. He commented that they were dedicated and cooperative all right, but they tended to act as spoilt children when they did not receive enough attention from him or from the other front-line workers. Mario argued that they would only take initiatives if they received the full support of the IDA. For instance, if something had to be arranged in San José, they would expect to travel there in one of the institute's cars.

Rafael and Nicolás, like most other gatekeepers, were not fully dedicated to farming, nor had they ever been so. Rafael was a small trucker and Nicolás earned an income as a cattle trader.¹⁶ Rafael was listed in the pineapple programme but soon opted out. Nicolás, the vice-president, became a beneficiary of this programme, but he later became a nuisance to the *técnico* Samuel Lozano when it appeared that he was neglecting his pineapple plot.

The Association was short-lived though, and by 1986 it had stopped functioning. A gloomy cost-benefit analysis was made of milk production by the Credit Fund. In short, the advice was to forget the idea and the Association stopped functioning. Nevertheless the Board remained in place, ready to undertake any new promising activity. After the failure of the animal husbandry programme all but two of the twelve founders of the Association became beneficiaries of the chili programme. However, the gatekeepers were a minority of the 30 or so beneficiaries of the chili programme.

The chili programme was followed by other promising agricultural programmes such as those of pineapple and *maracuya* (passion fruit). In the case of the chili programme already some rudimentary forms of farmers production organisation existed.

¹⁶The third member of the Association's Board owned a tinshop in San José, the fourth ran a bar in Pocora, and the fifth was an assistant to a lawyer in Guápiles. The other two had left the settlement.

These became formalized in the case of the new agricultural programmes established after the conclusion of the O34 Programme, those of pineapple and *maracuya*. The significance of this was that a new type of client-official interface emerged, one in which the capacity to establish strong forms of local production-oriented organization was central. Next, I discuss how such a new form of production-oriented organisation arose with the chili programme. This is done from the perspective of one settler who had played a major role in it, Miguel Huerta, and who later would play an important role in promoting the reconstitution of the Association.

Developing modes of local cooperation: the chili programme

Chili is a very labour intensive crop during the harvesting period. In order to distribute efficiently the work load it was decided to allot sections of the cultivated chili to particular persons/families. In this way the owner could make sure that the plants were well preserved and that all ripe chilis were picked. Miguel had learnt this method of assigning responsibility per area to groups (in this case whole families) on the plantations. On his farm three entire families worked during the peak periods. Decisions concerned with the level of payment to the labourers were also taken within the committee. A pay system was devised in which labourers would receive more per unit in periods when production was not very high. In this way fluctuations in daily income would not be so great.

Using the idiom of the *solidarista* unions¹⁷ in the plantations he would tell the labourers that they were also responsible for the health of the chili plants as these provided both the owner and themselves with an income. At one moment the kilo price of chili was increased by 25 cents, and it was decided within the committee to pass this on to the labourers. Miguel, then, was proud to observe that a single labourer would usually earn more than 400 colones (about 7 dollars) and that in some cases when a whole family was working they could earn in one day enough to pay for a week's food (the work was easy to do even for children of 8 years, Miguel argued). Never before had landless people from the communal centre had the opportunity to earn so much money in Neguev.

The committee of chili producers was, after the animal husbandry programme, the second attempt in the settlement to shape a mode of organization with the purpose of coordinating production activities and achieving the necessary unity for negotiating with agro-processing companies. Miguel recalls that the chili *técnico*, Samuel Lozano, gladly supported the idea of forming a Chili Producers' Committee in order to negotiate with the purchasing company over contracts. It was unique as it epitomized a new mode of cooperation between *técnicos* and farmers. It started in 1987 and it consisted of four members. Miguel was the president. Before a meeting with the agro-processing company was due, the whole group of chili producers would come together to establish a common strategy. Thereafter the Chili Producers' Committee would handle current problems with the company. Every three months a few members of the committee would travel with Samuel Lozano to Cartago (one of the largest cities on the Central Plateau of Costa Rica) to meet the manager of the purchasing company and arrange issues regarding transport and payment, new prices, etc. However, the relationship with the purchasing company became problematic when it started delaying payments.

¹⁷*Solidarista* unions were established in the banana plantations with the help of the government and the plantation owners, and they aimed at achieving a 'partnership' between employers and labourers. See Bourgois (1989) for an excellent account of the role of *solidarista* unions in fighting independent union

Referring to a major confrontation they had with the purchasing company Miguel commented,

"I am against the use of force but one day we had to stop a truck from leaving the settlement. Every week the truck would come and at the peak it would load between 700 and 800 bags of chili. They had not paid us for weeks. Every time the truck came they would tell us that next week they would deliver the cheques. Altogether they owed us three quarters of a million. Meanwhile we had to pay the labourers who complained that they could no longer get credit from the *pulperias*. That day, then, we decided not to let the truck leave and it helped because within a day someone came from Cartago with the cheques".

Later, however, the delay in payments became a habit, and a number of people who according to Miguel had little knowledge about how to negotiate, became more and more aggressive in their impatience, going as far as to accuse the committee leaders of being conformists (in other words traitors). It was his task then to calm them down and explain to them that it was easier to press their claims through dialogue, instead of engaging into UPAGRA-style actions. In reality the company had serious cash problems as they had lost one container shipped abroad. It was evident that it could not handle the large amount of chili delivered. Nevertheless the company continued buying, even until the middle of 1988.

It is interesting to dwell a little longer on the background and attitudes of Miguel as it tells us something about those farmers who, though critical of UPAGRA, were not engaged in gatekeeping practices.

A 'non-loyalist' farmer

Miguel Huerta clearly belonged to a different coterie than the founding members of the Association. This was evidenced by the fact that, though a cattlemowner, he had almost no relationship with Felipe Gonzáles, the veterinary official. Another feature that differentiated him from this group is that he played no role in the IDA's attempts to eliminate UPAGRA.

At the same time he was proud to be considered a "good", responsible and hard-working farmer. He shared the old Association's members dislike of UPAGRA politics, but was highly critical of their attempts to improve their position through their relationship with the institution. In this regard he was an exponent of a group of well-regarded settlers who were active in community affairs, but who had established working instead of gatekeeping relationships with functionaries. As we will see, his relationship with Samuel Lozano was particularly characteristic of his mode of operating.

His attitude vis-à-vis the institution can be illustrated in the reply he gave to a former UPAGRA leader (Pennycot) who urged him not to repay the debts he had with the Credit Fund after the success of the chili programme, "I said to him that when I went to the Credit Fund's office I did so freely and in full knowledge of the risks of the new programme. The IDA did not entice me to enter the programme with false pretexts. So, why should I let myself be influenced by those who urge me not to repay the debt"?

Miguel, a former plantation worker and overseer, had been influenced by the Christian Democrat corporatist philosophy of the *solidarista* movement in the plantations which stressed the benefits of solidarity between employer and employed in expanding production and improving the working and family conditions of the labourers.

In Miguel's view a radical organization like UPAGRA could only lead to counter-productive strife between the interests of the institutions and that of smallholders. Thus, he was in favour of establishing new modes of organization in the settlement.

His sense of communal responsibility was reflected in his being a member of various communal organizations like the educational board. He had participated in two courses on credit administration. However, he did not give that as a proof of his special relationship with the IDA. He resented other settlers accusing him of being an IDA favourite. In this respect he argued,

"Many people here think that by choosing me to participate in these courses I was favoured by the IDA. They do not understand that one major aim of the course was that I, in turn, should train other settlers here in Neguev. But no one responded to my initiatives to pass on the knowledge. Those who claim that I am close to the institution do not realize that I might have been trained to help them. I see it as my obligation to give advice to people".

He was also rather critical of institutional performance. When discussing the quality of extension Miguel lamented that there was no pressure on *técnicos* to do their work, there was no supervision. If they acted with responsibility it was only because of personal commitment. He commented,

"Often *técnicos* complain that they cannot do their work because of lack of transport. That may be so in some cases but I do not believe it is a major factor. Often you see five or six of them driving all over the settlement without getting out of the car. To become a *técnico* some have been studying for years and years. But they apparently keep their knowledge to themselves".

This attitude towards the IDA differed strongly from that of the gatekeepers. This reflected also in a number of differences Miguel had with them.

Miguel Huerta's productionist approach

Miguel had a controversy with Rafael, the President of the Association's Board, over the kind of projects the Association should promote. Rafael had been planning to establish a fruit packing plant in Milano with funds which were originally earmarked for a milk-cooling plant. The Association would then take care of the packing and transport of the pineapple and maracuya. The profits would be used to capitalize the Association. The members of the Crop Committees, however, were not so charmed with this plan. Miguel, in fact, was totally opposed to this arrangement, which he considered as exploitative and beneficial to those within the Association who did not grow pineapples, like Rafael himself. Furthermore, Miguel was worried about the kind of 'projects' promoted by the old Association members. He suspected that the money raised by these projects would be used in a way which would benefit only a restricted group of people. Another project he was suspicious of was that of purchasing a truck, since he was afraid that this would become a source of income for particular members of the board. Miguel Huerta, then, had a double loyalty, first towards the committee of pineapple producers and second to the Association. At the same time Miguel was convinced that it was important to separate production issues from the problems of the community. For, he feared that the Association would become a debating club in which lazy and irresponsible settlers could give vent to their frustrations. However, this was not the opinion of all the beneficiaries of the new crop programmes who had become members of the Association.

Summarizing this section, we see the emergence of a new set of views on issues of local organisation among non-radical farmers. At the same time a new strategy for dealing with the IDA arose which, contrary to gatekeeping practices, was intended to curtail entrenched forms of bureaucratic clientelism, in this way establishing a more independent relationship with the bureaucracy. Next I will discuss the attempts to revitalize the Association in the face of the necessity to create local forms of organisation in line with the new state policy of *agricultura de cambio*.

6.6 The Attempts to Reconstitute the Association

The new programmes which were established in the settlement in the course of 1987-88 were not funded by the IDA Credit Fund, but by state-owned banks. Hence, the beneficiaries of new programmes had to comply with regulations different from the IDA's. In contrast to the IDA's extension and credit delivery policy the new state agricultural policy of *agricultura de cambio* required that beneficiaries should organise in groups in order to facilitate the delivery of credit. Since the Association was the only farmers organisation in Neguev that had legal recognition, it seemed logical that new loans would henceforth be channeled through it. Yet, the Association was not the only organization which could represent the interests of beneficiaries, since each programme had a Crop Committee which had been set up in order to coordinate work activities. One task at hand, then, was to incorporate the various Crop Committees within the Association in order to gain access to bank credits in future.

As argued, towards the end of the O34 Programme attempts were made by beneficiaries and the *técnico* Samuel Lozano to establish local forms of production-oriented organisation. This also meant that the client-official interface changed from one in which the individual relationship between *técnico* and beneficiary stood central to one in which beneficiaries and *técnico* cooperated within a Crop Committee. However, this did not mean the demise of existing patterns of bureaucratic clientelism. The Association, still dominated by a group of ex-loyalists and gatekeepers became important as a means for channeling resources. At the same time it turned into the arena of struggle between the gatekeepers who were interested in continuing existing patterns of bureaucratic clientelism and those others who wanted to convert the Association into the major arena for decision-making concerning organisation for production and related community issues.

The reconstitution of the Association

In order to restructure the Association a number of meetings were organized in the second half of 1987 which were badly attended. Since there were complaints that no settlers outside the Milano sector were represented in the Association, the President of the Board organized a series of meetings in the most distant sectors of Neguev - Bellavista, El Peje and El Silencio. Attendance at these information meetings was very low, and in El Peje only two settlers showed up. For Rafael, the Association's President, this was a proof of the traditional attitude of settlers outside Milano.

In September of 1987, a meeting was organized to announce the new objectives of the Association. This meeting, held in Milano, was the best attended, with more than 20 persons. Three members of the old board were present as well as Mario Green, the social worker, and two extensionists, Samuel Lozano and Gabriel Rodríguez, and a majority of beneficiaries of the *maracuya* and pineapple programmes. In two short speeches Rafael and Nicolás, the president and the vice president, stressed the need

for unity and reported conversations they had held in San José with bank functionaries where it was stressed that in the future only organized groups such as associations, cooperatives, etc. would receive credit. This change in policy, they argued, required a totally novel mode of relationship with the state. It was then decided that all members of the pineapple (11) and *maracuya* (30) programmes should become members of the Association and make a contribution of a thousand colones (fifteen dollars) which would be deducted from the loans to be received.

Rafael also argued that the Association's objective was that of fostering production and thus not meant to be a communal organization. In response to criticisms of the limited appeal of the Association outside Milano, he argued that soon settlers in the other sectors would become convinced that the Association was the only road to economic improvement. In addition, he emphasized that membership of the Association would be closed to 'undesirable' elements. For that reason every new member should be recommended by two current members. Rafael also stressed that their task now was to reform the Association by incorporating new members, but that it was necessary to start with those who had already participated in the IDA's production programmes. One major point of disagreement at this meeting was whether a new board should be elected. Rafael and Nicolás reacted vehemently against such a proposal. They argued that they had always been at the forefront of the Association. Moreover, their terms would end six months later, and they saw no reason to resign at that moment. Yet, there were two positions in the board that had to be filled and elections were planned for the next meeting.¹⁸ Interestingly the meeting ended with a homage to Samuel Lozano for his commitment to the farmers and his success with the chili programme. He was made an honorary member of the Association.

A few months later Rafael stopped attending the meetings himself and, after being reprimanded several times by the other members of the Board, he was forced to resign. In fact, he was too busy at the time, since besides trucking he had taken over a bar in a different settlement. He had no time left to spend on the Association. Subsequently, pressure was exercised by the members of the new crop programmes on Miguel Huerta to become President. In march 1988 Miguel Huerta was elected President.

The Association as an arena of struggle

The relationship between the beneficiaries of the new crop programmes and the IDA front-line workers was still characterized by a kind of client-official interface which put much emphasis on the organizing role of the *técnico*. This was expressed in the decision which was made by the Board of the Association that in the future a guided extension system should be followed for all programmes¹⁹, a decision to which Miguel subscribed.

However, the guided extension system was a source of anger for a wide range of settlers, not only radical ones but also beneficiaries of the new programmes. In their view this system gave too much power to the *técnico*, with the result that the

¹⁸As a sort of concession one member of the *maracuya* and one of the pineapple programme were elected at this later meeting.

¹⁹The workings of a guided extension system was once explained to me by Rafael, "The *técnico* determines the average amount of inputs that will be needed, with a view to limiting the use of credit. Then he takes care of buying the amount agreed and distributes it himself. The settler only receives cash for paying labour costs. This minimizes opportunities for directing credit to alternative purposes".

beneficiary became too dependent upon him. They argued that if Samuel Lozano's chili programme had been a success it was because most decisions had been by both the extensionist and the farmers in the Chili Producers' Committee. The issue, then, was that decision-making should be made within the Association. It was argued that this should hold not only for technical issues but also for more substantial topics, such as the choice of crops and the negotiation strategy that should be followed with agro-export companies. And there were those who thought that issues which had to do with community infrastructure should also become a major topic of debate within the Association.

Miguel also had to deal with a situation in which open doubts were expressed as to the practicality of making a distinction between community and production issues, as Rafael and Nicolás - the former President and the vice-president of the Association - were continuously doing. After all if the bridges were not repaired the crops could not be taken to market. And, as many argued, it should be the task of the Association to deal with all these problems. Yet, both the Settlement Head and accommodative settlers such as Miguel himself were opposed to an expanded task-definition of the Association. For, if indebted and 'troublesome' settlers started participating in community activities via the Association it would not take long until they demanded that the Association make steps to improve their eligibility for credit. Indeed, this would amount to an invitation to UPAGRA to 'infiltrate' the Association and to demand an overall renegotiation of the debts. In fact, the views of some beneficiaries of the new crop programmes were not so distant from those of UPAGRA people. Let us now inquire into their discourse as it provided farmers with a language for expressing dissent and frustration.

The view of an Upagrista

Porfirio Gutiérrez was one of the UPAGRA leaders who expressed his doubts about the capacity of the Association to defend the interests of the beneficiaries.

In his view the only manner to improve the lot of the peasants was by the development of autonomous forms of peasant organization. Thus he did not believe in a close relationship between the Association and the IDA. In his view this was a straitjacket for manipulating the necessities of the community. He definitely had a very distinct view of local organization which, in brief, should be based on enhancing the farmers' autonomy in their dealings with external actors such as state institutions, agribusiness enterprises, and political parties. Thus he was convinced that the fate of organizations such as the Association would not be resolved by any *técnico*, not even by the most honest one, but by the capacity of the settlers to organize themselves and demonstrate that viable livelihood alternatives are possible.

Porfirio argued that farmer's organization also had to address the political aspects of the production problem. He often pointed to the fact that peasants in the area were always producing the non-profitable crops. Rhetorically he posed the question in the following terms,

"Have you ever seen peasant producers grow really profitable crops such as ornamental plants, or macadamia? You see here people from the entire world who with credits and subsidies from the government establish thriving enterprises in no time, Americans, Germans, Italians, Colombians, but not Costa Rican peasants. *Agricultura de cambio* is an invention aimed at offering more investment possibilities to these people. All new export opportunities by-pass us".

He was not opposed to cooperation with institutions such as the IDA, but cooperation should, in his view, be based on responsibility and mutual respect. 'Organisation',

'accountability' and 'solidarity' were recurrent key-words when he gave his opinion in a meeting. He would argue, then, that credit from any institute should not be accepted without the latter assuming the full responsibility for extension and the result of the technological package in the field. This implied that the farmers should have the autonomy to criticize the institute they were working with. Another demand that he always put forward in conversations with farmers was that contracts should be signed only between farmers' groups and companies or institutes, and not with individual farmers, since only organized groups can exercise enough control and discipline. In addition, he argued that only through community solidarity and a combative attitude was it possible to resolve problems with state institutions. He would not grow tired to repeat that it should be the job of farmers' organizations, such as the Association, to press state institutions such as the IDA to honour its promises.

In fact, the views of *Upagristas* such as Porfirio Gutiérrez influenced the debate within the Association.

Towards reshaping institution-client relations

Before examining the further attempts to reshape the Association it may be useful to summarize the argument up to now.

It has been argued so far that the Association, formed to serve the interests of a group of animal husbandry programme beneficiaries, was reconstituted through an alliance between a group of gatekeepers and the *técnico* Samuel Lozano to obtain funding for the establishment of new production programmes. The beneficiaries of the agricultural programmes (pineapple and *maracuya*) Samuel Lozano was promoting became new members of the Association. The founding members of the Association got preferential access to these programmes, but not all enrolled in them. Two different accommodation strategies were represented in the efforts to renew the Association; the gatekeeping strategy of the old cattle-owners and the autonomous strategy of members of the new agricultural programmes.

The *técnico* Samuel Lozano had silently supported the latter group. He had had a number of discussions with the former president, Rafael, about the lack of short and medium range targets. His criticism was directed at the fact that decisions were made and actions undertaken on an ad-hoc basis, without the Association being able to offer a response to concrete problems at the level of the whole settlement.

Next we will see how Miguel Huerta, the new president of the Association, attempts to enhance the autonomy of the Association by establishing a tactical distance from the IDA, with a view to making it attractive to the members of the new agricultural programme. This, in short, would imply that a shift had to occur from enrolling front-line workers to enrolling fellow settlers, something the gatekeepers had done little to accomplish. Thus, with the introduction of the new system of extension by groups and the necessity to carve out a larger space of autonomy, Miguel Huerta embarked on a series of activities directed at increasing the level of legitimacy of the Association towards the wider community.

Initiatives taken by the new President of the Association's Board

In taking up the presidency Miguel vowed that his major challenge would be the reorganization of the communal store which was run by the Association. It appeared that the store had been losing money because it was being used as a source of employment for the vice-president of the Association.

Another major task that he thought the Association should take on was that of pressing for the distribution of full legal titles by the IDA. This, in his view, was the largest challenge, for the titles they held were of limited value since they were subject to a mortgage of 20 years and settlers were not entitled to sell the land during that period. He believed that only when settlers were entitled to cancel the land debt in one payment, and hence acquire the right to sell or rent out the land without any interference by the institution, would they attain the necessary independence from the institution. The IDA, however, feared that if settlers received full titles over the land, under circumstances of relative poverty, many settlers might sell to outsiders, leading to the expansion of a new form of latifundism within the settlement sector. Furthermore, extending full titles implied that control over the settlement sector was lost.

I spoke to Miguel Huerta a few months after he had been elected president. He was rather positive on various counts. First, concerning the communal store he was able to improve the situation in a short period of time. When he took over the presidency there was a compounded debt of 270,000 colones (\$3,500) which had been reduced to only 40,000 colones (\$500). There was also progress in securing funds for the packing plant. And they had been negotiating with Fernando Campos, the Regional Director, over the handing out of full titles. Fernando had committed himself to searching for a solution by consulting with the IDA's legal department in San José.

A few weeks later Miguel had not received any notice about the issue. Subsequently, he and another member of the Association's Board travelled to San José. They were told at the IDA's headquarters that the maps for the registry (*planos*) were ready and that it was up to the Regional Director to start with the adjudication process. Miguel then started to doubt whether a real commitment existed on the part of the Regional Director to make headway in adjudicating land titles and to reach an agreement with farmers as to the price that would be asked for the land. This Miguel considered typical of Fernando Campos' reluctance to negotiate with any group of farmers whatsoever. In his view, the policy of the regional office was silly as it meant rejecting the opportunity to deal with a group of peaceful and 'democratic' farmers. Indeed, if UPAGRA members should decide to occupy the institution's offices - as the FENAC peasant union did in the El Indio settlement - the IDA administration would realize that they had lost a precious opportunity to resolve the issue. Certainly, a vast majority within the Association would have been happy to agree on a price of 4,000 colones (\$50) per hectare (a price which had been rejected by the FENAC in El Indio) provided they obtained full title immediately.

The further evolution of the Association, then, was largely shaped by its relationship with the production programmes and the attempts to press the IDA to release full land titles. Both issues had practical significance, yet progress in their attainment also had symbolic meaning as it provided proof of the capacity of the Association to take an autonomous stand towards the IDA while following the new government development policy. Concerning the strategy to follow, Miguel agreed with Rafael that the UPAGRA line only led to conflicts with the government and distracted from real production oriented development, making it more difficult to attract state funds to the settlement. Thus he feared that an increased influence of this union would have negative effects on investment possibilities and, hence, on the value of land.

He started working on the establishment of a Social Welfare Subcommittee. It was his view that the Association should have a social role within the community, otherwise people would only be interested in its ability to offer external resources. This only promoted clientelism and apathy. One indication of this was that the latest meeting was attended by no more than 17 persons. One concrete problem that this

Social Welfare Subcommittee was to resolve was that of the bridges. There were 25 in Neguev and all were defective. Yet, no one took the initiative to repair them. In Miguel's view part of the blame was the IDA's as "they don't do anything themselves and they don't let others do it". It was the Regional Office's new policy not to become involved in communal tasks anymore. Yet, because the settlements came officially under the auspices of the IDA, they were not eligible for municipal support (in this case Siquirres). For this they would have to pay the local authority taxes, but to be able to do so they needed 'full titles', otherwise the cost for the improvements of roads and bridges would not be reflected in an increase in the value of the land. Meanwhile UPAGRA leaders were holding meetings in which the issue of the titles were discussed.

Miguel found that the IDA was handling the social situation in the settlement in a quite irresponsible way and feared that UPAGRA would decide at a given moment to step up action, for instance by occupying the IDA offices. His overall assessment of the Association became rather negative. He had his doubts as to the sense of investing time and energy in it. He had much more confidence in the committee of pineapple producers of which he also was the president. He considered that it was the lesson they drew from the chili programme that there should be a sense of common purpose and active participation in all phases of production; the negotiations with the agro-export companies, the resolution of practical problems regarding techniques and labour coordination, etc.

In the last resort, he argued, if the Association did not work well he would consider withdrawing with the whole group of pineapple producers and join a cooperative of an adjacent village, called Coopegermania which was oriented to pineapple production. The advantage of such a step would be that the (political) intricacies of dealing both with community and productive issues could be bypassed. Joining Coopegermania would entail that both issues could be neatly separated.

Disillusionment with the Association

A month later Miguel had grown even more skeptical. He complained that most board members were not attending the weekly meetings. Eventually, only himself and one other member were dealing with the daily affairs. They were even signing letters and taking decisions without being able to consult the others, something which was officially against the Association's rules. The store's administration was again in a mess. Nicolás Jiménez, who besides being vice-president was also the paid store-keeper, would not take the initiative to hold a periodic inventory. Deficits were running high again. Then Rafael decided to lower Nicolás salary by half. Nicolás, then, after accusing Miguel of trying to lay the blame for the deficits of the Association on him, resigned. Miguel tried to keep the peace by assuring him that no one put in doubt his integrity and commitment. Yet, it was difficult for Miguel to understand how the store could have been losing so much money.

Neither was the Social Welfare Committee working. Various groups from the sectors approached him to ask the Association for help with the construction of roads, bridges and other communal projects. He explained to them that he, on a personal basis, was ready to help in so far as he was involved as a member of the community in such activities. However, he made it clear that he was not entitled to commit funds from the Association for other projects than those approved by the general assembly. Yet, as he was intent on showing that the Association cared for the community he saw himself acting as an intermediary between these groups and the institution.

He had also been inquiring in San José as to progress on the establishment of telephones and electricity to the settlement. Even in this respect he criticized the former leaders. They would go to San José for projects they were particularly

interested in but they showed no interest in long term communal projects. Nevertheless, they would charge the Association expenses for their trips. Neither had they been accountable to a wider group. This way of operating had been, according to Miguel Huerta, a liability for the credibility of the Association as an organization oriented to the development of the whole community.

This situation was increasingly frustrating for Miguel. He claimed that it was the first time he had worked in an Association, and the experience had been far from positive. The settlers expected it to accomplish everything without actively participating. Also, the Crop Committee members who had been elected in the Association lost interest after they noticed they could get little out of the Association. Only those who had a long relationship with the IDA remained involved. And unfortunately they worked primarily on their own behalf and neglected other activities and projects which could benefit other sectors, or even the entire community.

In view of these experiences Miguel decided to resign. It gave him much more satisfaction to work within the Committee of Pineapple Producers. The last blow for the Association was the withdrawal of its honorary member, Samuel Lozano. This occurred after a conflict following a visit of the Minister of Agriculture. Characteristically Miguel Huerta sided with Samuel in the conflict, detailed below.

Epilogue: The resignation of Samuel Lozano as honorary member of the Association

Samuel resigned as honorary member following a visit by the Minister of Agriculture to the Neguev settlement. This incident is interesting as it showed the fragility of the alliance between the *técnico* and the Association and the difficulties entailed in promoting its independence from the IDA.

The new Minister of Agriculture came to the Atlantic zone invited by the Regional Director of the Ministry. He was interested in new agricultural projects in which peasant/farmers were involved. The programme included speeches at the local agricultural service centre (the CAC) in Guácimo and a tour around Neguev to see the new programmes. In Guácimo the vice-president of the Association gave a short speech in which he stressed that the new agricultural programmes in Neguev had been set up by the Association independently of the IDA. In this way Nicolás Jiménez, the vice-president of the Association and one of the remaining 'gatekeepers' in the Association's board claimed the credit for the progress achieved.

What happened next was an enormous confusion with regard to which plots the Minister should be taken to and by whom. Thus the *técnico* of the *pejibaye* (peach palm) programme (one of the few old programmes that was not a failure) decided to take him to see the plot of the large Villegas family²⁰ which entirely specialized in this crop. The Association leaders did not like this and interpreted it as a serious form of interference with their programme. After all *pejibaye* was not one of the new programmes being promoted by the Association. Moreover, the Villegas were not members of the Association and had never shown any interest in joining.

Consequently, Nicolás Jiménez became angry and said so to the *técnicos* right after the Minister's visit, causing a very unpleasant situation for the *técnicos*. In a

²⁰The Villegas family was mentioned in Chapter 3 as the only one which conformed to the model of the client as entrepreneurial farmer. They were a two generation family and owned altogether 6 parcels. They had become, on their own initiative, the most successful growers of *pejibaye* (peach palm) by themselves developing production techniques and maintaining contacts with an agro-processing company in San José. In fact, the extensionist in charge of this crop acquired much of his knowledge from them and according to the administration they attested to the 'fact' that individual farmers were able to use credit in a productive way without having to engage in paternalist relations with *técnicos*. Furthermore, they were the motor behind *pejibaye* production in the El Peje sector as they gave advice to other producers.

similar vein a few members of the Association decided to write a letter of complaint to the Regional Office in the name of the Association.

As a result of the incident and the letter of the Association Samuel decided to resign. He was very disillusioned by their "immature reaction" and fully supported his companion, the *pejibaye técnico*. Samuel then wrote a letter to the Association explaining his decision. He argued that the *pejibaye técnico* had as much right as he, to choose a few good plots to show the Minister. Moreover, he pointed out that the Minister had not been invited by the Association but by the Regional Director of the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition he considered that Nicolás Jiménez had not been honest when he had commented in his speech that the new programmes were being promoted without the intervention of the IDA. After all he himself was an IDA extensionist. This was the end of Samuel's involvement in the Association.

6.7 Summary and Conclusions

IDA intervention in Neguev gave rise to practices of gatekeeping encompassing a set of activities oriented to securing preferential access to institutional resources by settlers who lacked experience in, and knowledge of, local farming and who therefore came to rely to a large extent on institutional credit and technology. Gatekeepers attained preferential access by convincing bureaucrats of their willingness and ability to develop a farming style which conformed to the institutional image of the farmer as a rural entrepreneur. In reality, however, they were not committed to long-term agricultural activities in view of their involvement in non-farming activities, such as trading.²¹ It was argued that gatekeeping led to a kind of client-official interface which can be characterized as bureaucratic clientelism. It was within this context that the Association of Small Producers was formed.

The Association was formed in 1985 by a group of beneficiaries of the animal husbandry programme who had participated in the IDA's attempts to reduce the role of UPAGRA in Neguev. It aimed to improve the marketing of milk at a time when it had become apparent that the animal husbandry programme was in serious trouble. Local forms of organisation were a source of worry to Fernando Campos, as he feared that they would become the arenas in which clientelist types of relationships between the IDA and settlers could surface, and in which extension and training activities were targetted at individual farmers. Clientelism, however, survived in the face-to-face relationships between settlers and front-line workers. It was not surprising, then, that the Association was captured by a group of loyalists who readily engaged in gatekeeping practices.

As the outcome of the animal husbandry programme was a disaster the Association stopped functioning. Due to a shift from an integrated rural development approach to a policy oriented to supporting organised groups of farmers, attempts were

²¹Gatekeepers, then, can be defined as individuals who are able to limit other beneficiaries' access to the institution by becoming their spokesmen. As IDA loyalists who participated on the side of the IDA in the struggle against UPAGRA they acquired special access to institutional resources. As recognized "translators" of settlers' needs and of their life circumstances they gained a say in the delimitation of the criteria and procedures for resource distribution. As co-implementors they argued that they were helping to improve efficiency, while devising organizational forms which in reality were most suited to themselves. In the process they became highly skilled in projecting an image of themselves which conformed to 'the model of the client' held by the front-line workers (see chapter 3). 'Gatekeeping', thus, is an accommodation strategy which is predicated upon a clientelist relationship with IDA officials.

made in 1987 to reconstruct the Association. The social composition of the members had changed, due to the success of the chili programme and the positive perspectives of other agricultural programmes. The beneficiaries of these programmes lacked the prerogatives of the gatekeepers as they had not played a pivotal role in the struggle against UPAGRA. Miguel Huerta, the new President of the Association and active member in the committees of the new agricultural programmes, then, made attempts to establish a new kind of 'non-clientelist' relationship with IDA officials. This occurred in the context of the closure of the 034 Programme.

In order to force a shift within the Association from a clientelist relationship to a more autonomous relationship with the state, Miguel Huerta had to broaden the social base of the Association to make it more numerous and representative. But in order to increase its attractiveness to a wider group of settlers he had first to tackle a number of 'social issues'. This, however, proved to be difficult for two reasons. First, because of the relentless criticism on the part of 'radical' settlers who were skilled in using the discourse of community, which made these attempts less convincing. And second, because of the unwillingness of the IDA to accept a new type client-official entailing a larger degree of autonomy - for fear that Upagristas could infiltrate it - undercut the legitimacy of the Association.

Indeed, Miguel Huerta depended heavily on the *técnico* Samuel Lozano for achieving the much sought-after restructuring of the Association. When the attempt failed, they both continued their work in the production programmes. Problems related to community organisation were simply postponed and for the time being left to radical groups. At the same time, Miguel Huerta was operating on two fronts; besides the Association he was busy in the Pineapple Producers' Committee. In other words, if reconstituting the relationship with the IDA in an autonomous way did not succeed, he had an alternative by pursuing his organisational work in the Crop Committees.

In consequence the gatekeepers' practices of keeping apart the discourse of agricultural modernization and that of community by segregating the latter and labeling it as potentially subversive, were not outrightly questioned. Doing so would have run counter to Miguel Huerta's way of working the system, as it would have entailed addressing a number of issues which had to do with the conflictive character of IDA intervention. Miguel, obviously, did not do so, as this implied politicizing the issue of access to state services in such a way that possibilities were opened for UPAGRA. Therefore, he chose not to use the discourse of community in order to enlarge the Association. Such a strategy, in short, did not conform to his way of perceiving the problems of Neguev.

It was argued in Chapter 5 that an intervention-coping strategy consists of a way of talking about interests; practical knowledge about how to deal with the state; and practices of enrolment. Regarding the first point it was asserted that interests are discursive means which are formulated in relation to specific problems and struggles. Moreover, it was argued that such a discursive formulation of 'interests' occurs through the localization of discourse. Finally, I distinguished three discourses which are recurrent in the Atlantic zone: that of agricultural modernization, community and democracy/citizenship.

Thus in the case of Neguev we see that the discourses of agricultural modernization and community prevail in struggles concerning attempts to establish and develop local modes of organisation, in this particular case the Association. The discourse of democracy/citizenship plays a role as a background topic in the social interfaces between the different groups of settlers and officials, but is not 'localized' in such a way as to become a discursive weapon in the struggles and negotiations in Neguev. For one thing, in Neguev, the 'productionist' discourse of agricultural

modernization was central to the relationship with the state. Themes such as that of increasing the efficiency of credit delivery by working with groups of organised farmers were readily taken over by all those linked to the Association and to the new production programmes. On the other hand, the community discourse was almost wholly the property of UPAGRA, so much so that raising 'social issues' was interpreted as tantamount to inviting subversive elements to undermine the Association from within.

Concluding, it can be said that the attempts to reconstitute the Association were averted because the discourses of agricultural modernization and community remained split.

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- 1978: - UPAGRA invades the Neguev hacienda.
 - Squatters' Committee is formed and squatters are evicted three times
 - After squatters are taken to prison in Limón UPAGRA organises march to San - José in order to force the IDA to purchase the Neguev
 - 1979: - SPPAL invades Milano grasslands after an agreement is reached between the IDA and UPAGRA
 - Settlers' Committee is formed by IDA *agraristas* and bank credit is distributed
 - A pool of loyalists is created by the *agraristas*
 - 1980: - Incident over maize marketing centre takes place in Milano
 - UPAGRA leaders are accused of terrorist activities
 - 1981: - Coordination Committee meant to normalize the relationship between the settlers and the IDA is formed after investigation of a Parliamentary Commission
 - 1982: - UPAGRA leaves Coordination Committee
 - Agricultural Development Programmes are initiated and credit is distributed on a large scale, UPAGRA loses support
 - 1983: - Fernando Campos is appointed Head of the Settlement
 - Coordination Committee stops functioning
 - 1985: - Association of Small Producers is formed
 - UPAGRA urges not to repay debts
 - 1986: - Association is discontinued
 - 1987: - Chili Committee is established as the last Agricultural Activity financed by the 034 Programme
 - End of the 034 Programme, The Neguev becomes a regional office and Fernando Campos becomes Regional Director
 - Policy of *agricultura de cambio* is introduced
 - UPAGRA forms a committee for the renegotiation of the debts
 - Attempts to reconstitute the Association
 - July-August: Meetings in the settlement sectors are organised
 - September: Reconstitution meeting Association is held, the old Board remains
 - 1988: - Miguel Huerta is elected President of the Association in March
 - Social Welfare Subcommittee is formed
 - Miguel Huerta resigns in September
-

Table 6.3 Chronology of events in the Neguev: 1978 - 1988

CHAPTER 7

RESISTANCE AS AN INTERVENTION-COPING STRATEGY

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I aim to examine a different type of intervention-coping strategy: that of resistance to a highly authoritarian style of intervention. I do so by showing how a group of radical settlers in one sector of the Tierragrande Settlement (called Macadamia) actively engage in forms of resistance against the new style of intervention introduced by the O34 Programme. Intervention in the Tierragrande Settlement differed markedly from Neguev, where large amounts of resources were provided in a highly concentrated way. Tierragrande had been invaded in 1979 by the SPPAL Peasant Union. By 1987 the settlement had a long experience in dealing with state institutions.

In the present and following chapter the discourse of democracy/citizenship is central. This discourse prevails in the frontier areas of the Atlantic zone as it is fundamental in settlers' attempts to attract state resources. At the same time the state ensures the political allegiance of frontier communities through the establishment of infrastructure and the provision of services.

In discussing resistance as an intervention-coping strategy I pay more attention than in previous chapters to the actual practices of negotiation and confrontation by which various actors - front-line workers and administrators and settlers - are able to adapt the discourses of 'community' and 'citizenship' to their own local situations. Thus, we will see that the local meaning which was attributed to notions such as 'community', 'progress' and 'democracy', certainly differed from the meaning given to such abstract notions by the IDA front-line administrators.

Before starting with the case study I will give a short description of the area and an account of the circumstances in which Tierragrande became a case study.

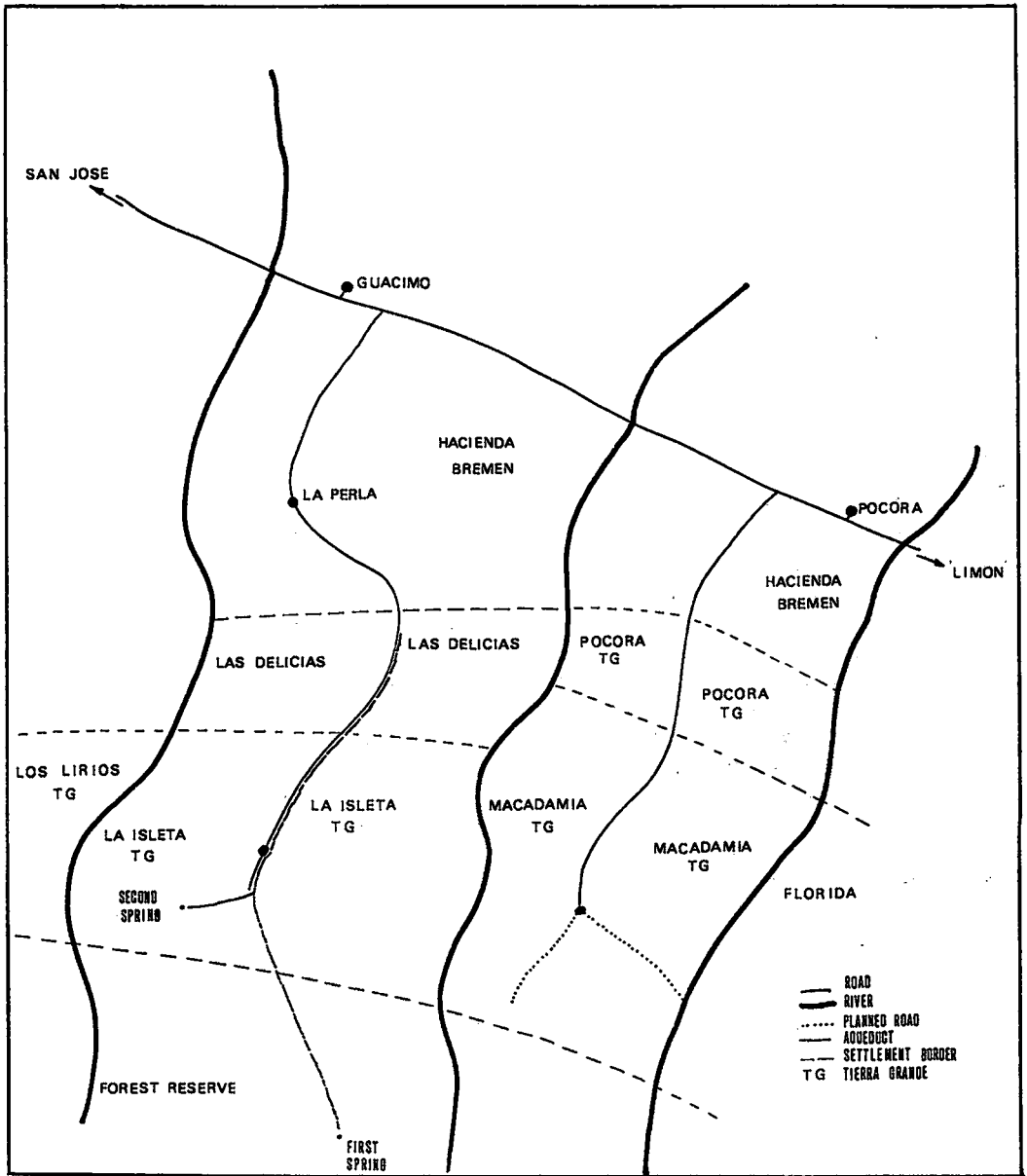


Figure 7.1 Schematic map of the Tierragrande settlement

7.2 The Regional and Institutional Context

The Tierragrande settlement comprises a long fringe of territory to the south-west of the railroad from Guápiles to Pocora, bordering the forest reserve. It was a *hacienda* before the invasion, but the legal ownership status was never clear. Neither was it ever used for agricultural purposes. An American entrepreneur, owner of one of the major sawmills in the Atlantic zone, bought it at the beginning of the 70's with the intention of exploiting the timber. For that purpose he had cleared part of the forest, making it possible for a helicopter to land and a house to be built.

The invasion of Tierragrande took place during a period in which the population of villages in the lowlands (such as Pocora) was substantially increasing due to the expansion of the plantation economy. In the beginning of the seventies the adjoining Florida settlement was invaded. A few years later several other *haciendas* followed, among them that of Tierragrande. These invasions were organised from the lowland village of Pocora. Although leftist peasant unions actively supported these invasions, it is clear, at least in the case of Pocora-initiated invasions, that the initiative came from local people in Pocora. They sought advice from lawyers related to the Communist Party only after the squatting started. Later some became involved in leftist politics.

The Tierragrande *hacienda* was not invaded at one go. First, in 1973, the sector called Tierragrande-Pocora which was nearest to the railway was invaded, while Tierragrande-Macadamia and Tierragrande-Isleta followed in 1975.¹ In this chapter I concentrate on Macadamia and in chapter 8 on La Isleta.

Tierragrande-Macadamia was occupied by a squatters' committee in which landless labourers from various parts of the Atlantic zone participated. In contrast with the other sectors of Tierragrande, the squatters' committee endured as the main form of local organisation. It also maintained a close relationship with the Communist party through the FENAC peasant union (formerly called SPPAL).

The sector of Tierragrande-Macadamia comprises a small part of the whole settlement, with less than 40 plots. At the moment that the IDA started showing more interest in this settlement only a minority of the plot owners lived there. No family could live off what the land produced. Most would work on the lowland plantations or on cattle ranches, and would travel to Tierragrande at the weekend. Few lived permanently on the settlement. Those who did, earned an income by working on the plots of those who worked outside, or had sons who supported them financially. There were also a few single or divorced men who had very few needs and who actually had chosen for a quiet life in the frontier instead of the hard life of the plantations. A number of settlers, though, had planted good plots with coffee in expectation of the new road that was to be built by the IDA. So far, however, the costs of transporting the beans to the lowlands were so high that coffee was not yet profitable enough to maintain a family.

¹These invasions were organized by five local leaders, two belonging to the Unidad party, one to the *Liberación* party, one connected to a plantation union and one who was then a high-school student, Mario Green, the same IDA social worker of earlier chapters, who did not yet belong to any party. Two of the local leaders, the Menéndez brothers, belonged to a locally well-known family from Pocora. Later they became involved in leftist politics through a third brother who at the time was union leader in the southern plantations of La Estrella and who would later become an MP for the Costa Rican Communist Party, Vanguardia Popular. It is interesting to note that in 1979 the Menéndez brothers organized the invasion of the Milano grasslands in the Noguev settlement as leaders of the SPPAL union.

Intervention in Macadamia: the Institutional Point of View

My interest in the Macadamia sector of the Tierragrande settlement was aroused by an official's accounts of the "problematic" nature of this area. This was in the end of 1987 when the Neguev office was turned into a regional office and service was expanded to surrounding settlements. In adopting the policy of *agricultura de cambio* incentives were provided to organised groups of entrepreneurial farmers. At the same time a regional development programme was being designed which included infrastructural works, credit, extension and titling and in which various agencies would participate under the coordination of the Ministry of Planning.² One objective of this regional programme was that of opening up hitherto inaccessible frontier areas in order to integrate them into the regional economy. The major objective, then, was the creation of the necessary conditions for productive development, and one of these conditions concerned the imposition of a legal order in frontier areas. Tierragrande-Macadamia, in this context, was definitely viewed as the most problematic settlement due to the persisting influence of a leftist union there. The 'communists', I was told, were represented there by a particularly vicious and malicious leader who regarded the settlement sector as his personal domain. At the same time, I can remember the enthusiasm the Regional Director, Fernando Campos, and the Interim-Head, Hugo Paz, displayed when talking about their attempts to counter communist activities in the settlement to rescue its population for "democracy and prosperity".

The general atmosphere in which intervention by the Neguev Regional Office took place was highly influenced by the occupation by settlers in 1987 of the offices of another settlement belonging to the 034 programme, El Indio, by the same peasant union which was active in Macadamia. The occupation of the El Indio offices had the support of a large sector of that settlement population, producing not a small amount of embarrassment to the IDA. Indeed, the negotiations between this organization and the IDA were widely publicized in the national press. This situation convinced Fernando Campos, the Regional Director of Neguev, of the necessity to intervene in similar potential 'pockets of subversion'.

The incident which prompted the decision to intervene in Macadamia was a request for help from a group of settlers who claimed that they wanted to become independent from the FENAC union. They complained that this union held them in a state of serfdom, and that they were not allowed to apply for the new development programmes announced by the government. Hence, they urged the IDA to stop leftist intimidation and to establish a legal order in the settlement. In February 1988, after a few 'preparatory meetings' characterized by a marked presence of IDA functionaries and numerous promises of support in various fields of development activity, a new "democratic" committee was elected. This democratic committee was intended to replace the existing 'red committee', which so far had been the only form of local organisation in Macadamia.

The extended case study that follows concentrates on a series of encounters which took place in the course of two visits to Tierragrande-Macadamia with IDA officials. I have chosen these encounters since they throw light on how the discourses of democracy and community acquire a specific, local, meaning through practices of intervention and intervention-coping. The main actors in these encounters are a number

²This Regional Development Programme was financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and started in 1988.

of officials of the Neguev Regional Office, the leftist leader of the 'red committee, Diego Casas, and the spokesman of the pro-IDA or 'democratic' committee, José.

7.3 First Visit to Tierragrande-Macadamia

On my first visit I was accompanied by Mario, the Neguev social worker. The road was, even by local standards, extremely bad, with rough climbs in some stretches and foot-deep mud on others. Although the distance is not more than 10 kilometers from the secondary road it took us more than an hour to get there. After passing the three iron gates at the entrance to Macadamia (as it is commonly called), a road turns left. A few hundred meters further there were two houses on the left and in front I saw a clearance with a school and behind it the Big house. The clearance was intended to be the future *centro de población*, village square. As yet, there was only a football field. The large house I was told by Mario had been constructed by the *gringos*, the Americans, who formerly owned the *hacienda* Tierragrande. Nowadays it was used as a shop and meeting place for the community. There were a few women selling drinks made of pineapple. Mario thought that it was a *turno* (a party organised with the aim of gathering money for a specific communal project).

In front of the large house there was a gathering of people. We got out of the car and made our way towards them. The communist leader, Diego Casas waited for us and greeted us politely. Mario introduced me as a sociologist who in cooperation with the IDA was undertaking a study of social conditions in peasant settlements in the Atlantic zone. I corrected him remarking that I had no official relationship to the IDA and that it was neither my intention to spare the IDA of critique. Mario then confirmed my remarks and added,

"We are very flexible and neither do we fear constructive critique. Pedro wants to undertake a comparative study between Neguev, a settlement in the lowlands which has received much help from international agencies and these settlements which have received up to now almost no support. The truth is that not all settlers there have improved their situation (*salieron adelante*), some even owe large amounts to the Credit Fund. Thus Pedro is interested in examining why some people in settlements where there has been relatively little institutional support have been able to establish viable farms in an independent way".

I remember being surprised by how lucidly the social worker was able to translate to this community leader the research problematic I was accustomed to expound to functionaries, while at the same time using my presence in order to demonstrate that the institution, and he himself, did not fear constructive and rational criticism. Subsequently Diego suggested we go inside so that we could talk in a more relaxed environment. Inside there were some 5-6 persons, all men. One older man was cooking. I noticed that the walls were covered with pictures of women in bathing suits posing before landscapes in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union; apparently cut out from propaganda magazines. On the table lay a book on the history of Peru. In response to my interest in this book he remarked that he was very interested in the history of the Incas, and their socialist system.

After a short introductory chat Mario started explaining the necessity for a united committee to be established on behalf of the community. He argued,

"I tell everyone that I do not mind who are the leaders and with whom I will have to deal. But I definitely consider that one condition for the organization of the community is that it be united and for that reason there should be only one committee. Nowadays, with the new Regional Project for the Development of the Atlantic Zone, with the construction of the new roads many new possibilities are surfacing. Thus, in order not to lose these opportunities it is necessary to demonstrate to the institutions that the community is united, that it supports the leaders and that they have the capacity to channel the resources offered".

And he proposed that the 'red' committee be disbanded and that they all unite around the newly chosen 'democratic' committee. They could then propose that a new committee be elected in which all positions in the settlement were represented, "as long as a majority of the settlers agrees". After listening to Mario's account Diego started a long monologue,

"I agree with you that it is necessary to have a united community with a combative organization. In fact, we haven't been struggling for anything else during the 13 years that the settlement has existed. The road and the school, even if they look very primitive have cost us a lot of suffering. We have been building the road by bits with the help of the municipality and of the Rojas. How many times we went to the IDA to ask that you deliver your promises, by groups of 10 in order to be listened to. And if I may say the truth, for I am someone who likes to talk openly, the IDA is the agency that has done the least for us. Since the settlement exists we have been isolated from the institutions and from the market. Up to now we have had only expenses and no gains. Furthermore, this settlement has come into being thanks to an invasion, otherwise we would not have the land. Thus we have little to be grateful to the IDA for".

To my ears Diego talked vernacular. Sometimes it was difficult for me to understand him. He was serious but not overly aggressive. He continued relating how a few years ago the Executive President and others who formed part of the Executive Board had arrived in Tierragrande. They had promised them diesel and a tractor (*chapullin*) for improving a few roads, and zinc for the school. On that occasion formal agreements were signed. Diego commented that he still had copies of the documents. Yet they had not received anything of what had been promised, except for the diesel.

"And, if one reminds them about it they say that you are a problematic person, that you are a liar. I know that at the IDA they see us as unruly and they think that we do not want to cooperate, but that is not true".

In order to prove his point he gave the example of the delivery of legal titles, which they had boycotted some time ago. He argued that if they did so it was because they wanted a few things to be clarified, among other things whether they would have free access to bank credit with those provisional titles. For, "we fear that such a (provisional) title will tie us even more to the IDA".³

³The problem in fact concerned the usefulness of a provisional title issued by IDA. Although these were indispensable for gaining access to bank credit, Tierragrande settlers had not been willing to accept IDA's conditions for the distribution of titles since they did not agree with the costs imputed by the institution. They were asked to pay 2,000 colones per ha. with an annual interest rate of 8%. This amounted to 60,000 colones (\$1,000 dollars) for a parcel of 30 hectares. That was in his opinion far too much in view of the fact that no settler derived a sufficient monetary income from the parcel. In this way predominantly

He then argued that they were ready to work with anyone who wanted to help them, and he stressed that the only institutions which had helped them were the municipality and the CNP (the marketing board). At the same time he gave his opinion that cooperation with institutions should be based on a political understanding of their interests,

"We do not mind to go to any MP, of any political party, to ask for support. At the same time, I belong myself to an organization with a clear political perspective. But this is a personal matter. Yet, it is my opinion that without a clear political position we wouldn't have achieved anything. Without political consciousness we would have been divided. Without education there is no organization and without organization there is no progress".

Mario, now had his eyes closed. Diego at a given moment asked him, not without some sarcasm in his voice, whether he was too bored to listen. Mario, showing that he was well aware of the situation answered that he was listening intently, and that this was his way of concentrating himself. (I then had the impression that Diego was conscious that he was scoring points in my eyes, and that he was enjoying the situation). He continued,

"We see now that the IDA has come here and has been making all kind of promises, like Santa Claus. Suddenly you show interest in finishing the road, extending credit, building houses, etc. But the result up to now is that the community is divided and disorganized. We used to have a very strong association but since the IDA arrived and this 'ghost committee' (*comité fantasma*)⁴ was created only conflicts have thrived".

And he then referred to a problem that had arisen between one of the oldest settlers and the president of the 'ghost committee'. He argued that the real reason for this division stemmed from the fact that the IDA's current regional administration had decided to give preference to one sector of the population over the others in building roads, neglecting others who needed the roads as badly. In fact, a small group in the settlement wanted to divert the original road scheme as designed by the engineers, so that they would benefit from most of the road. And he challenged us to analyze closely the composition of this 'ghost committee', for according to him most of the members of this committee belonged to this same small group. He remarked, "thus you see that these leaders do not resolve problems, they create them". Regarding this committee's constitution he asserted,

"This ghost committee has been established in a very dubious way. It is composed of people who do not live in the settlement and others who do not even own a

non-residents with speculative interests would benefit as they could easily pay the yearly installments as well as the labour required in communal duties. Yet, it was the locals who had to perform these duties. The issue was also one of justice, as they argued that in return for the purchase of the land, the IDA should provide services. On the other hand they were prepared to pay that amount if the interest rate was lowered to 6% and if access to credit was improved. In addition, they demanded that the title given to them should be a generally recognized legal document and not a provisional IDA title.

⁴From now on I will refer to the IDA-supported committee or the 'democratic committee as Mario calls it, by Diego's name for it, i.e. the 'ghost committee'. The old squatter's committee will be referred to as the 'red committee'.

plot. Most of them are persons who bought plots while living outside and fear they might lose them. Look, we are not going to take the plots away from them, but neither are we going to promise to adjudicate them in their favour in return for their votes. Moreover, the assembly in the school in which the committee was constituted was not legal, as the settlers were not notified at home as the law demands".

And he claimed that he, for one, had not been invited. He went to the election because he was by chance around, and participated in the voting, although most inhabitants of the settlement were not present. He regretted having done so, since,

"I learnt that a number of irregularities took place. For example, when I left the school I saw that one tall black functionary was commenting to another official that some votes were being counted for three. The other answered that it was all right, that there were good reasons for doing so".

Diego, furthermore, asserted that in spite of this fraud he got 16 votes (out of 40) for the post of secretary. And he continued accounting for this accusation of electoral manipulation in terms of the lifeworlds of the functionaries,

"Sure I understand that functionaries have to earn their salary and that they were expected to commit these actions by their superiors. But they should understand that the peasant's livelihood conditions are very different from that of the functionaries. For one thing, peasants have to work hard on the land before obtaining an income".

At that moment Mario interrupted him in order to make the point that he was totally sure that there were no irregularities in the voting procedure and that he should know that because he himself monitored the whole process. If Diego had detected any irregularities why did he refrain from giving notice of it, as was his democratic right and even obligation. The only way in which they might have influenced the outcome was by taking some people who worked in the lowlands but had a plot in the settlement in order to participate in the elections. This was hardly an offence since they had the legal right to vote in the assembly. Regarding the invitations he argued that he had distributed them to various settlers living in the different sections in the settlement. He did not deliver them himself as it would have cost him too much time.

Diego then laughed and answered that he understood the constraints under which he had to work and that he considered that it was part of the game that the IDA showed preferences for some people over others. But this should not work at the expense of the unity in the community. In addition he argued that in this 'ghost committee' only three of the 5 members were living in the settlement, and this was against the rules. He also made it clear that he knew everything that was discussed in these meetings, for there were members who were already dissatisfied with it and who were thinking of joining him again.

Mario, still very calm, responded that he did not mind who was elected by the community. "The IDA is ready to work with anyone, as long as they are elected in a democratic way". Diego answered that he agreed with that view and that they were ready at any moment to coordinate with the IDA. What they could not accept was that they would come and start threatening the people with putting them in jail. The only effect this had was the division of the community and that was also unfavourable for the IDA as well. In fact, in this way expectations were created which the institution could not fulfil. Then Mario made a sort of proposal,

"If it is true that only 3 committee officials are working then a new committee should be elected. The "fiscal" could request that a new meeting be convened in order to discuss this issue. In this way a new committee could be elected representing all groups".

Diego replied emphatically no. They already had a committee (the 'red committee') that was functioning well with the support of a vast majority of the settlers. It would be dishonest to dismantle this committee. For, they were already recognized by the community association of Pocora (a sort of regional cooperative) and the National Community Development Association (DINADECO). Recently they had been invited to participate in a seminar organized by JAPDEVA (the Port Authority in charge of Development of the Atlantic Zone) in Limon. A committee, he argued, entailed a lot of work and a lot of sacrifice for the community. The 'ghost committee', so far as he was aware, had so far undertaken nothing. "They would probably complain that going to Limon or San José to arrange something would cost them a working day, and on top of that demand that their costs be fully paid. The members of the legitimate committee, in turn, would never complain about the time lost. They would see it as an investment for the benefit of the community". And he asserted that if he invested all the efforts he expended for the community on his own farm, which he had neglected, he could have developed 10 farms. In concluding, he argued that the most honest thing for the IDA to do was to recognize their committee.

Mario was growing a little restless, but let Diego finish his account. He retorted that it was not proper to dismantle a committee that had been democratically elected, that would only weaken the community. Then he recalled that he had an appointment with the newly elected committee and he proposed that in the meanwhile I have a talk with the peasant leader. The peasant leader then set out to tell me about the origins of the settlement, about the organizational support they had received from the FENAC and its regional branch in Guápiles, during the invasion which had taken place 13 years ago.⁵ When they invaded it, he recalled, the *gringos* were felling trees which were transported over the river to a sawmill north of Siquirres. The workers would come there by helicopter and would stay in the Big House. For the rest no infrastructure existed. Until now, he remarked, there had been almost no interest in them on the part of the IDA. Only lately, since the administrative responsibility over the area had shifted to the Neguev Regional Office, IDA officials started to arrive in larger numbers. This, however, was a breach of an agreement reached a few years ago with the Central Offices of the IDA which entailed that they be left in peace.

On the other hand, their relationship with the Rojas family, the owners of the neighbouring Bremen *hacienda* had always been excellent. They had helped his committee a lot financially. One reason for that was that they were viewed as potential land-invadors. He remarked, "When we ask them for help they react telling us that they are not a public institution and that we should go to the Siquirres municipality or to the IDA. Yet, they do not fail to contribute to our projects. On the other hand they also profit from them. The road for example is also to their benefit". In addition they would form groups to work in the *hacienda*, an arrangement which was beneficial for both

⁵Originally Diego came from a colony near Guápiles which was founded at the beginning of the century. At a young age he sought employment at a plantation where he became a member of a leftist union. Through this union he became involved in the invasion. Later he became the local representative of the communist peasant union. He was divorced, since "maintaining a family in those circumstances was very difficult".

parties; the *hacienda* profited from a cheap labour force and the settlers derived a badly needed monetary income.

Such investments as the road involved much sacrifice, he argued. The more as there were so few sources of income up there. For that reason they designed a sort of tax for all land transactions, which should be used for further projects. After all, the increase of the value of land was due to the work of all the settlers and they should benefit from the profits made by those who sold the land. This money, in turn, contributed to various projects, such as the school and for the maintenance of the roads, as well as communal activities, etc. He resented therefore that the IDA chiefs were portraying him as a speculator and the local peasant union as a communist organisation. In fact, he argued that soon they would receive the legal proof that they were affiliated to the Development Association of Pocora. Then he could accuse the IDA before the judge of obstruction of a legal communal organisation.

At that point I told Diego that I was interested in attending the meeting of the new committee. I explained to him that it was my method to talk with all sectors of the community in order to gather the various points of view. Diego then commented that this was a very good way of understanding the reality of a community. The IDA in contrast was not ready to listen to them. We shook hands and Diego invited me to stay a few days with him so that I could see the reality of the settlement from a different perspective from that of IDA officials. After accepting eagerly this invitation I left for the other meeting.

The democratic or 'ghost' committee meets

In the school the president of the 'ghost' committee, José, was leading the committee meeting, standing in front of a blackboard, setting up an agenda for the coming weeks. Some 12 persons were present. He was evidently happy to see that the social worker was present.

Mario was in an irritable mood, and commented that the conversation he had just had with Diego had sowed some worries in him. He asked José whether it was true that only 3 members of the committee were active. José replied that that was a lie. Out of the five, four were present, only one, was not present, and that because he was in Pocora and was active on behalf of the committee⁶. Mario then answered that he was glad to hear that, for if two of the five officials were not active a new general assembly would have to be convened to elect a new committee. Then he asked how many people were behind them, for it worried him that Diego said that only a few were attending their meetings. Pepe, one of the leaders answered that out of the 49 who supported the committee from the beginning no one had changed allegiance.

Mario was glad to hear that. The only thing he could recommend was that they make more efforts to expand the group, adding,

⁶It was indeed difficult to appraise how many supporters each committee had at the time. When I went to the settlement with an official most people would present themselves as supporters of the democratic committee. When I went on my own, reality proved to be more complex. People then would express their hope that IDA would rapidly resolve the most pressing problems of the settlements, without any mention of allegiance to the democratic leaders. Out of the six members of the democratic committee three expected to acquire personal gain from it, whether by gaining title over disputed plots or having the road redesigned. Two members had stable jobs in the lowlands and feared that IDA would dispossess them from their plots for not having residence in the settlement. Hence, they chose to take a position in the democratic committee. The president, Hector, on the other hand, had a personal conflict with Juan Hernandez.

"The more you are, the easier it will be to get recognized by people within and outside the settlement. I have said to Diego that, though I have given you advice, I respect the democratic rules and that I will work with the group that represents most people. I definitely prefer to work with you because you have been elected democratically. Diego accused me of having manipulated the results of the assembly and of electoral fraud. I must say that I do not have anything personally against him and that I am ready to coordinate with whoever represents the majority, but I very much dislike his insinuations. I do not like to deal with people who mock with the truth".

Javier, an older settler, then commented,

"But you know how Diego is, he has always been giving orders around here thanks to these tactics. You should not give it any importance".

After the meeting ended José approached Mario, commenting that he sensed he was behaving strangely towards him. He inquired, "Mario, I know that you are angry with me (*encabronado*). Please tell me what is happening. Maybe I have done something wrong. After all I still have a lot to learn". Mario, somewhat annoyed answered that there was no problem at all. He was just very hurried because he had to attend a party seminar in Guápiles, but added that Diego (the communist leader) had confused him telling him that the leaders of the association were not working, and that they were even not living in the settlement. José remarked then that he was comforted to hear that there was nothing personal between them. He added that he would appreciate Mario's complete honesty to him should personal irritation arise.

It is expedient here to add a short note on José. He came originally from Turrialba where his father owns a well-known popular restaurant. He came to the Atlantic zone to work on a road construction programme which included the road from the motorway to the entrance of Tierragrande. While he was living in the village of Iroquois near Pocora he married the daughter of an ex-squatter, who had sold his land in Tierragrande-Macadamia but who still had a son and a brother there. Thanks to their help José was given the opportunity to buy a plot in the settlement. He soon became an intimate friend of Diego and one of the local representatives of the peasant union. He was the only settler with a car and in this way he helped many. In addition the car permitted him to establish a store in the Big House.

I add this account of the way José was recruited because it is to some extent typical for the way most settlers who did not participate in the invasion got access to land in Tierragrande-Macadamia. In effect, two other members of the 'ghost' committee had occupied important posts in the squatters' red committee, and had used their previous contacts with leftist union and party leaders to gain access to land.

But let us continue with the visit. We left the school and set off for the car passing the women who were selling food and fruit-juice. A football game was in progress by the red committee against a team of the neighbouring sector of La Isleta. Mario approached the women and made a few jokes about the current situation, and asked them what they thought about the different committees. One of the women answered that she did not go any more to the meetings of either of them, "as they do not do anything more than fight". Then Mario suggested to them jokingly that they form their own independent committee.

Discussion: Mario's assessment of the situation

On our way back we discussed the situation. Mario assessed that José's committee had been losing ground and that some of the most respected settlers had distanced themselves from it. He thought Diego was much more clever than José in his dealings with the community. 'He has much more experience and works harder'. However, Mario then commented that he had one fault, and that was that he was a liar; telling people around that he had manipulated the elections at the general assembly. He did not like that sort of person and pledged to teach him not to be a liar, "I will cut his relations with all the institutions", he said. "I have more resources than he has, and he has not the support of a party with national prominence. I am a militant of the party in power". We also talked about José. According to Mario his authority as a leader was stained by a personal rivalry with Diego which made it look as if he was more interested in revenge than in the community. He stressed the need to have capable and convincing leaders, who would not derive their legitimacy from fighting against someone but from fighting on behalf of an ideal.

Mario also argued that it was a bad thing to mix personal problems with conflicts over local organisation. The point, he asserted, was that José's wife was a *picara*, by which he meant that she was open to the advances of men. I myself had already heard from different sources that Diego had a relationship with her and that probably this was the source of the enmity between him and José. They used to be great friends and political allies. They would go to Pocora and Guápiles and party for days. José used his friendship with Diego to establish a shop in the Big House, where Diego was living. As the distance between the Big House and José's plot was quite large José would spend the night there. Yet, while José was in the shop, Diego would go to his plot to visit his wife. The moment that José learnt that, he declared war on Diego. In Mario's view conflicts over women should not be mixed with struggles concerning communal organization⁷.

Analysis

So far we see the common problems Mario becomes involved in when doing his job as an IDA official. He becomes entangled in the dynamics of local conflicts in the frontier; conflicts which as usual display a mixture of principled and personal enmity. As we saw in previous chapters Mario was quite good at handling such issues, given his detailed knowledge of the social life of this frontier area and his participation in local politics. It is not surprising then that he is ready to negotiate in order to overcome the division of the community into two opposing groups. And in doing so he assumes that he can negotiate from a position of superiority. But Mario encountered a total unwillingness on the part of the communist leader, Diego, to negotiate, even though he went quite far in his proposal to find a way to end the division of the community. In effect, Mario in doing so is negotiating the authority of the state, something which his superiors, who as we will see combined an authoritarian attitude with a lack of knowledge of the complex dynamics of local organisation in the frontier, would not approve of. This willingness to negotiate, however, proves to be his weak point as

⁷It must be stressed that this was the men's (somewhat sexist) view of the problem between Diego, José and his wife. I was never able to get the latter's point of view, or more generally that of other women in Tierragrande.

Diego adopts a rather principled - in Mario's view rigid - attitude. Indeed the stakes are becoming high and the conflict between the two acquires a personal character.

Diego is skilled in using the discourse of 'community' and 'progress' in defending his views. In doing so he is able to point to the inability of the state to fulfill its obligations. He rhetorically argues that as a community they had to take over a series of tasks which the state should have undertaken. Thus it was the community that took the initiative for resolving the most stringent problems of the settlers, the road. And this was only possible by establishing their own organisational forms and holding to a determinate political ideology. The IDA, he argued, should not come to tell them what they should do, and even less after the latest divisionary tactic of changing the course of a road in order to gain the allegiance of small group of settlers. Thus he argued that the IDA should stop manipulating the settlers of Tierragrande and recognize the legitimate peasant union there. He was optimistic as he could count on the support of FENAC as well as on a series of contacts with institutions which had been established over the years.

We also see that the new development committee - Diego's 'ghost' committee - is not able to project itself as the legitimate representative of the settlement by establishing an independent position from the IDA, something which worries Mario. Yet, at the same time, the lack of local organisation in the settlement is resented by a large group, if not by the majority, something that is shown by the reaction of the women who are preparing the *turno*, to the communal rivalry.

In concluding, it can be said that a number of conflicts within the community which have been triggered off by the willingness of a particular group to get rid of the radical leader acquires a highly ideological character, in which issues concerning the rights and obligations of citizens in the frontier vis-à-vis the state become central. Underlying this alliance between settlers and the IDA were conflicts of a personal character as well as the new expectations generated by the IDA's new style of intervention.

Next, I will examine another event in which an attempt is made to 'normalize' the situation of 'lawlessness' in the frontier. What was special in this attempt was that Fernando Campos, the Regional Director of the Atlantic zone, and Hugo Paz, the Interim-Head of the Neguev Settlement themselves played an important role in the endeavour. We will see that in the process they deploy an intervention ideology which appears to be quite unsuitable for the everyday requirements of exercising social control in the frontier.

7.4 Chasing Communists in the Frontier

A visit was planned for the following month with the purpose of organizing activities in cooperation with the 'ghost' committee. This visit was also intended to show their support to the leaders of this committee. Two cars full of extensionists left for the settlement. I travelled in the first, driven by Hugo Paz. On our way there we intermittently met settlers coming from Macadamia and heading to the lowlands. Each time we made a courtesy stop and a small exchange of information followed. They seemed very interested in the improvements the IDA was going to introduce and the promised opening of new credit facilities. Hugo Paz would then make it clear that in the future bank credit would only be available in the settlements with the written approval of the line-extensionist and the Regional Director. He argued that this policy had been

introduced with the purpose of improving the technical criteria of credit delivery and avoiding credit diversion. This, in effect, was a warning to the settlers that in future all relationships with state agencies would take place through the IDA's regional office.

Arriving at the settlement at about 10.30 a.m. we found a group of settlers waiting for us at the crossroads. We all shook hands. There were some 15 persons, among them José, the secretary of the 'ghost' committee and his wife. José welcomed us and then started to talk about how it was necessary for the IDA to intervene in the settlement, and with a "firm" hand. He talked about the subjection of the settlers to the communists under the leadership of Diego, who behaved as if there were no law in the settlement. A list of accusations followed. Diego, he declared had been negotiating with land, evicting people who did not conform to his ideology or attend the meetings of the union. Luckily, the IDA had now come to liberate them from this ideology. He added that he was not against communism, he himself used to have sympathies in that direction. But, he argued, communism in the Atlantic zone had lately become undemocratic.

There were various settlers present who attested to the veracity of these accusations by claiming that they themselves had been cheated by Diego. Some had scraps of paper which had been given as purchasing accounts. Favio, for example, a settler who bought a plot from the union gave an account of the whole procedure. He recalled that he was introduced to the members of the red committee and that they voted in his favour. Then he paid an amount to Diego. The owner of the plot received a few thousand colones less than he had paid Diego. He asserted that there was no formal account of the way in which this money had been administered. He was not the only one who complained about the *chorizos* (corrupt practices), committed by Diego. A woman told of how she had paid a large amount for a plot, when the former owner had in fact abandoned it without claiming the improvements on the land.

Hugo Paz became the more enthusiastic with each accusation. He made comments in the direction of Moisés one of which was "well, now we have a lot of legal proof, at least to throw him out of the settlement. We may even file a suit against him for fraud and send him to jail". Moisés, the *agrarista*, looked less enthusiastic and more serious than ever. After this the discussion became more technical. Various groups were formed, one around Hugo Paz and Moises, one around Mario Green and a few around the other officials. Moisés deployed the Tierragrande map and together with Hugo Paz and office-holders of the 'ghost' committee they started to study the legal situation of various plots and to discuss the situation of the road. José explained that the problem was that the road that had been laid out by the IDA's engineers through a swamp and a river. There was an alternative road which crossed the plot of a settler called Agustin. Recently, however, he and José, who has two school-aged-boys, had quarrelled and the former would no longer permit his plot to be trespassed. José noted that "now when the river rises my children have to pass on their way to school with the water up to the level of their bellies". Not only José's family was affected. There were also some 12 other families who in the present situation were virtually without road communications. The solution they proposed was that the road be diverted so as to cross partly Agustin's and partly José's plot. He stressed that there was a broad consensus in the settlement that this was the best solution. José, himself, was ready to comply with this alternative.

Hugo Paz listened attentively and thereafter made a few questions about the location of the other farms up in the mountain. José answered that they agreed with his proposal. Then Hugo Paz, discussed the case with Moisés and remarked that he saw no problem to change the course of the road, as there were legal provisions which

entitled the institution to confiscate for communal purposes the fringes of a farm's land for road construction. Moisés simply assented. Then a few specific cases of plots were discussed.

Mario, in the meantime, sat down to chat and joke with a group of settlers. His style was very relaxed and he seemed to enjoy the gathering. At a given moment he started to explain to them that they should become more independent from the institutions, also from the IDA. For that purpose he used the following example.

"Imagine that I lean my head on your stomach and I look at you. Your features will be indistinguishable and I will have a distorted view of your physical make-up. Moreover, I will be watching you from below whereas you will be looking at me from a higher position. Yet if I stand at a few meters distance from you I will be able to see you in a more proportioned way, I will be able to observe you as a totality. You will seem not so frightening as I watch you at the same eye-level and it will be easier to study your gestures better. The same holds for the way you look at the IDA, for it is important to take some distance and assess the institution's advantages and disadvantages in a more independent way. You will have to learn how to submit requests and negotiate with institutions such as JAPDEVA, MAG, etc. Now with this new project of development of the Atlantic zone a lot of opportunities will become available. I can help you with a number of tasks, such as editing letters, putting you in contact with important people from agencies or political parties, but it is you who will have to take initiatives.

Concerning the legal recognition of Diego's committee by the development association of Pocora he commented that he had been talking to some people of the Pocora municipality. Apparently Diego had some support there from a few "personeros" (elected members of the municipality). According to Mario these people were mostly interested in negotiating votes for the next elections. And since he himself was a 'personero' he had convened a meeting in order to force a decision to remove them. He added that he had more reasons for asking the resignation of those *personeros*, but he would use this particular case to demonstrate that they were placing their own interests before that of the party". In this way he had wanted to prevent the red committee from being recognized instead of the democratic one⁸.

We were waiting for Fernando Campos, the IDA's Regional Director, to come. It was already noon and the officials went to search for food in the houses of settlers they knew. Some of the functionaries, among them James, Mario and me, went to the house of Agustin to see whether there was lunch. The fact that we went to his house was telling for the complexity of inter-personal relations in this settlement. Agustin was a well-known character with an extensive knowledge of the whole area, and it was known that he used his knowledge and network at the frontier to help - often in bad faith - squatters establish themselves, thereby earning an additional income. He was also a guard on the Bremen *hacienda* and we met him always on his horse, on our way to Macadamia. He was a protégé of the Rojas family and it was rumoured that he was a natural son of Carlos Rojas, who bought the Bremen *hacienda* in the fifties. Initially Agustin had sided with neighbour José in his conflict with Diego. Shortly afterwards,

⁸On another occasion Mario explained to me that there were two persons in the communal association of Pocora, his village, whom he wanted expelled "because of their opportunism". According to him everything they did was in order to launch their career within the *Liberación* party. One of them was a brother-in-law of his. Their intention, he argued, was to secure the support of the local communist leaders in the association by helping Diego in return. This was absolutely against the political code.

however, a vehement conflict erupted between them both. Agustin accused José of behaving in an authoritarian and bossy way and proceeded to put fences between their properties, thus denying José direct access to his farm. According to Agustin, José then broke down the fence and threatened his life. Agustin then went to Pocora and denounced him at the police station. As he once remarked to me, "If I am killed at least they will know who did it". It was not clear what the role of Diego was in this conflict but it certainly diminished José's chance to become a legitimate community leader. In fact, it gave him a volatile and conflictive image.

When we got back the same group of settlers were waiting. They had been joined by a few older women. It struck me that most functionaries were sitting in the cars. Hugo Paz was talking to some settlers. At a given moment Hugo decided to give a speech before leaving, stating that, "It looks as though the *ingeniero* Fernando Campos had not been able to make it despite his clear commitment to come. He had an important meeting this morning", he said, "and as you know these meetings have a beginning but no end". He went on to say a few words on his behalf.

"To begin with I would like to congratulate you on the task that you have fulfilled. You have already reached the middle of the road and you should know how much we value your efforts. We are aware of the difficulty of making a living in a place where law has not yet arrived, subject to the fancies of elements pursuing particular non-democratic interests. You will see that you will surmount these difficulties with the help of the legal institutions which represent the legitimate will of the Costa Rican people. But the road is not easy and probably you will have to pass a number of obstacles. The law is slow but when it arrives the law is effective. Everyone who goes against the law will have to suffer the consequences. For my part I do not have anything to say to Diego. He is a settler like any other, with the same rights and responsibilities".

And he continued,

"It will be our legal department which will determine whether the things that have occurred here until the establishment of the democratic committee are legal or not. I think they are not legal but it is their duty to evaluate that. We can say that in this settlement we have entered a new phase. Up to last year disorder and illegality were widespread. This year everything will be different, for the moment has arrived to create the lawful conditions for ensuring the development of the settlement and an improvement in the welfare of its families. You know that now you will be entitled to receive bank credit. For that purpose you will need a recommendation signed by the head of the settlement and the extensionist in charge of the respective crop or activity. Naturally we will give such a recommendation only to elements with a progressive mentality, with whom we know that we can work. Naturally the troublesome characters (*problemáticos*) will not get such a recommendation. I would also like you to understand that we do not only work for a salary but that we also have a work spirit (*mística de trabajo*). We also want to contribute to the peasant's well being".

Unfortunately the extensionists could not show assent as they were chatting in the cars. Finally Hugo finished his speech with the following words, "I would like to tell you that the donkey is walking and that you should take care that he keeps on walking". At that moment one of the settlers, Favio, who was well-known for his directness, interrupted him,

"We appreciate very much what you are doing for us, for life for most of us has not been easy. But what we need is quick results, for as long as there is no road we cannot market our products. Thus I would not agree with you that the donkey is already walking. For it has to carry too heavy a load. What we need is not a donkey but a four-wheel drive vehicle like the ones you drive".

The people started to laugh. Hugo Paz responded,

"You should not think that we do not worry about the circumstances in which you live. But you should understand that everything takes time. You are not the only settlement that needs roads, credit and extension. This is a natural process in the life of a settlement. First the conditions of law and order must be established in order to set out to develop the settlement".

At that moment a confusing situation arose. One woman settler who lived in the lowlands complained that it was impossible to work if squatters (*precaristas*) could at any moment occupy your plot. She urged the IDA to take immediate and effective action. Hugo responded that in such a case it was important to notify the regional office immediately in order to facilitate the eviction of the squatters by the police. As a land reform institution they were not entitled to evict squatters.

At this moment a settler on horse-back came by announcing that Fernando was on his way. The group continued discussing issues related to the squatters (*precarismo*). There was much hilarity when a woman who started to complain about a settler who was very troublesome (*problemático*) and promoted squatters' invasions in adjacent plots was told by another woman, "but doña María, this man is your own uncle". Doña María then responded, "well, your brother is also helping squatters on his side of the settlement, isn't he?"

When Fernando, the Regional Director, arrived he first made his way to Mario Green to gather information. Subsequently he took a place before the group besides Hugo Paz and asked Moisés to join them. Moisés then explained a few things to him. Mario, I noticed, went to the cars where the extensionists were sitting and remained there the rest of the time. Hugo then made a brief, public summary of the situation in terms of the struggle against the communists. Fernando then started to congratulate the people for their courage in fighting against these "elements" who had been terrorizing them for so long. He then inquired whether there was legal proof, in the form of documents, accounts, bills, etc. in order to instigate legal action against Diego. Hugo Paz answered that there was plenty and that Moisés had a long list of the crimes concerning commerce with land. Fernando reacted with, "Send them to the legal department (of the IDA) so that they can start the normal procedure. We will also ask for the invalidation of his plot".

Various persons started to complain about Diego and the squatters he had been putting in their plots. They urged the IDA Regional Director to show that he could stop the communists. Fernando then stated,

"I understand very well your situation. The methods these persons use are those of the banana plantations where they incite violence by means of strikes and when serious incidents take place they stand back and wash their hands. It is common there that someone who does not want to follow the orders of the union is beaten down. I see that you would like to administer justice yourself, but you should avoid that by all means, for we want to establish a state of law, of order. The communists would like you to do that so that they can fish in troubled water. The

first thing you should do in the case of irregularities is to notify the *agrarista*, in this case Moisés.

In the meantime Fernando made some comments to Moisés and Hugo, signalling that it was most probable that Diego would come to know immediately after that meeting what had been discussed there. Hugo, then, interrupted the meeting and commented,

"We know that there are persons who tell Diego everything that is discussed here. He is cognizant of everything that your committee agrees upon or what is agreed with us".

Fernando then took over and started to explain to the people that they were experiencing a crucial stage in the development of the settlement. Thus he argued,

"These situations are quite common to us. I have seen it in dozens of settlements. We understand very well the experiences you are living through. In every settlement, as in other areas of life, we see a good side and a bad side. You are the good side of this settlement and they (the communists) the bad one. It is a shame that our democratic system must be so slow. In San José, for example, you see that a thief is already released a few hours after he has been caught. Democracy shows its weakness but ultimately it always wins. Here we do not live under *Sandinismo*, we do not live under an oppressive communist regime. What you should do is comply with our indications and persevere. That is the only way to end the chaos, injustice and disorder. Only united we will be able to surmount this situation. I have had much experience with this process. Generally it takes 5 years until a state of order is consolidated".

He continued,

"The next stage after consolidating law and order which is also a very difficult one is that of converting the settlers into agricultural entrepreneurs. That is only possible after a process of natural selection. You should not think that we choose the good or the bad settlers. No, that is a process which nature itself takes care of. The best settlers survive and the bad ones are forced to sell their farms. For, the truth is that the majority of you have not been more than labourers, with the exception of José, and that because of his family background".

Hugo agreed and added,

"It is a whole learning process to become an entrepreneurial farmer, something you cannot achieve in one day. That requires a change of mentality. A necessary condition is that you follow the recommendations of the *técnicos* and, in addition, that you show initiative".

Various settlers agreed and similar examples were discussed. At that moment José asked for the floor,

"I completely agree with Don Hugo Paz and with the *ingeniero* Fernando Campos in that it is necessary to create order here. I myself can say that I am an object of persecution by Diego and his henchmen. We know that he does not operate alone but that they receive expert advice from union experts who come here regularly. They confer in the *casona*, which, following their tradition, they call the union house. Since I broke with Diego and chose for the democratic path they have been

committing all kinds of chicaneries against me (*toda clase de jugadas*). The last one was to close the way (referring to the conflict over the road with Agustin). This has also been harmful to 16 other families. Yet this has been only one in a series of hostilities. They also poured sugar into the motor of my car, they have rooted out cocoa from my orchard and they also have damaged me in a very personal way, and in a very well-planned way. In addition a case was filed against me by Agustin for threatening him. I have witnesses who can declare that there are no legal grounds for that. Thus, in return I have filed a suit against Agustin because of slander. I have had problems with this individual before and I know that he is quite a *problemático*. That should be taken into account at the moment of distributing the titles".

And he continued,

"They have also filed a suit against me for selling liquor. It is true that I sold liquor (*guaro*) in small quantities in the Big House, but I did it because otherwise the shop (*pulpería*) I established there would not have been profitable. With the car I have saved the lives of various persons, also of people who nowadays I count as my enemies, by taking them to the clinic. As you see this situation has been quite unpleasant for me. Diego is doing everything to get rid of me".

Fernando then intervened and remarked,

"It is people like you we need. You can count on our support. But you should be conscious that everything must take place through legal channels. For violence has to be responded to with justice, otherwise chaos emerges".

José reacted,

"I think you are right and for this reason it is important that strong action be taken, a signal that convinces the doubtful settlers and Diego that you are ready to support us".

Fernando answered that they could not do more than they were already doing since they had to see to many other settlements, some of them much larger.

The atmosphere was growing tense. José was trying to draw a statement of strong commitment from the Regional Director. But apparently not everyone agreed with the course the meeting was taking. One older settler remarked that he would have been happy if those friends of his who were allied to Diego had been present at the meeting so that they would have become convinced of the strong support the IDA was giving them. Then, a settler called Osvaldo asked for the right to talk,

"Some moments ago Don Hugo Paz insinuated that someone was passing information to Diego. I would like to declare here that in spite of the fact that Diego has been a good friend of mine and still is, I am not the type of person to act as a spy. When I talk to him I do not discuss with him what has been agreed in the committee meetings. The fact that it was Diego who proposed me for the post of controller (*fiscal*) does not mean that I am a puppet of his. I do not agree with most of what Diego did the last time. For that reason I was ready to take office in the new committee. It is true that I am a communist, yet, that is not a reason for agreeing with Diego's behaviour. I believe in democratic communism".

Some people around me were growing quite uncomfortable. Hugo Paz reacted by saying that he had not been referring to anyone in particular, "if it were so I would have told you personally. But if there are persons who have doubts about you, so prove the opposite". One settler, then, remarked that Osvaldo was the committee's controller not because Diego had proposed him for that office but because the community assembly had chosen him for that post democratically. Fernando, for his part, observed, that it was totally natural that people discuss communal issues. Only in that way can other people, less involved in communal organizations, become cognizant of what was going on. After all the committee is not a secret organization. Most important in his view was that there be no open confrontation in the community. In his opinion Osvaldo had no need to fear anything. Osvaldo then added,

"Although I have also my communist way of thinking, like Diego, I do not agree with the way he has been acting lately. Yet, I believe that Diego has also done very good things for the community and that personally he is a very fine man".

At this juncture various persons agreed. A woman said that a distinction should be made between Diego the leader and Diego the neighbour (*vecino*). As a person he is "a beauty", unfortunately he is in error. The other women, even the one who complained so much about the squatters agreed. Fernando then added,

"This is a democratic country and everyone has the right to sympathize with whatever political party he or she wishes, as long as the democratic rules are followed. Hopefully Diego will change so that the settlement can become united in its search for progress".

Finally José thanked the functionaries for their cooperation and started again to talk about the road. Fernando interrupted him rather harshly and noted, "you have already talked about that before". The meeting ended. We shook hands with the settlers and walked towards the cars. Fernando asked Moisés to return with him in his car. Later Mario approached me and commented,

"This José still needs much experience to become a good leader. Diego will eat him alive. The committee is not working well. They have not yet filled out the legal documents necessary for becoming recognized by DINADECO (the national community service). I can help them to write letters and put them in contact with important persons, but they themselves have to send them".

Analysis

The encounter highlights a contradiction between the style of operation of front line workers such as Mario, the social worker, and Moisés, the *agrarista*, and that of the front-line administrators, Hugo and Fernando. The latter's operational style exhibited a mixture of paternalism and authoritarianism. For one thing, they showed a lack of real interest in the dynamics of local conflict and organisation, shown by Fernando's Darwinistic theory of settlement evolution and his educational views on the 'real' agrarian entrepreneurs. The problem of poverty and marginality in the frontier was openly explained by him as the result of a 'natural selection process' both at the settlement and personal level. There was no mention in his account of the legitimate complaints of the settlers of having been neglected for so many years by the state.

Hugo was even more naive, as both the *agrarista* and the social worker⁹ would later contend. Moisés considered it to be impossible to oust Diego on the basis of the existing evidence - a few scraps of paper - which in his view had little legal value whatsoever and he made it clear to me that he resented that Hugo would not draw on his experiences and deal with leftist organisations through political negotiation. He had once suggested to Hugo that in his view the best way to 'neutralize' Diego was by seeking a political agreement with the FENAC at a central level, by demanding from them that they would force Diego to comply with the 'ghost' committee, and the IDA, in return, would not persecute Diego. Hugo's reaction was that negotiation would be superfluous since the 'legal system' was strong enough to deal with corruption. Yet, Moisés had never been able to successfully evict a settler from this settlement.

The social Darwinism and formal legalism of Hugo and Fernando, however, contrasted with the discourse on 'citizenship', 'democracy' and 'progress' that permeated their statements. This became clear to both settlers and the officials present when Favio demanded more commitment from the IDA, and by Osvaldo who demanded that his political views be respected and that he should not be treated as a spy. In effect, the lack of subtlety in dealing with the local dynamics of conflict caused a tense situation at the end of which the participants made it clear that they rejected a witch hunt against Diego and his allies. Yet this does not mean that Fernando was not aware of the drawbacks of such a course of action. He made a step backwards when confronted with the statements of personal support for Diego. In fact, the great loser of this encounter was José who did not get the unconditional and full support he expected. His repeated requests for permanent IDA intervention and punishment of Diego could then only appear as a source of division.

Concluding, the operational style of the IDA administrators like Hugo and Fernando, made it difficult for front-line workers to continue their work since they exacerbated local conflict, and they increased the vulnerability of pro-IDA leaders of being accused of creating divisions in the community. In effect, it was the front-line workers who realized the limits of this confrontationalist style best, as they saw that the IDA would lose its credibility if it was not able to impose its authority fully. It must be noted that underlying this difference between the administrators' and the front-line workers' attitude was the differing role that the ideology of intervention played in their operational styles. Whereas it was clear to the front-line workers that the ideology of intervention had to be adapted to the particular circumstances of local client-official interfaces, the administrators held to it in an unmodified way in their interaction with settlers in the 'field' domain.

Next, we will see how local conflict was expressed through a series of actions from both sides.

⁹Indeed, Mario Green expressed his unhappiness by distancing himself from the whole event by taking a place in the car together with the other officials. One must bear in mind that, as a participant in the invasion of Tierragrande, Mario knew the history, personalities and struggles of the settlement too well. Moisés, by contrast, maintained a strict bureaucratic attitude.

7.5 Organizing Resistance: The Land Invasions

This meeting proved to be somewhat disappointing for the regional administration. Fernando, for one, was of the opinion that a lot of work still had to be done in order to 'normalize' the situation in Tierragrande. In his view settlers there were still under the ideological influence of the leftist union, while leaders like José expected that the institution would resolve all their problems. At the same time he considered it not worthwhile to keep spending so much time and manpower on a small settlement, especially now that the regional office had to project itself towards a large number of settlements each with its own specific problems. Thus it was decided that the social worker and the *agrarista* should carry out the work of 'education'. To that effect they would visit the settlement in turns, each every week.

The situation, however, became more complicated when notice came that a number of invasions had taken place in Tierragrande-Macadamia, particularly on the plots of four members of the 'ghost' committee who happened at the time not to be in the settlement. José came to the regional office and accused Diego of having organized the invasions as a provocation to prove that the IDA was not capable of carrying out its promise to eradicate his influence.

In a few visits I undertook to the settlement the situation appeared to be quite confused indeed. The Mercedes banana plantation near Pocora closed with the result that many workers lost their jobs, thus increasing the demand for land. Diego assured me that he had no active participation in the planning and implementation of the invasions. Yet, it was quite implausible that the invasions took place without his consent. Diego adopted a rather comfortable position. He claimed that he was neither in favour nor against these invasions. It was an issue between the plot-owners and the squatters. The problem was due to the fact that these owners did not live on their farms and therefore contributed little to community activities. It was not clear to him what the attitudes of the squatters were, but he had already had contact with them and had told them that his position would depend on their ability to convince the community of their willingness to become responsible members of it. At the same time he argued that they had to reach a good agreement with the former owner.

The squatters appeared to be a mixed lot. Among them were young families who built a shack on plots of land which were definitely abandoned, but there were also characters with the reputation for invading farms in order to sell them at a profit. The frontier, it must be noted, attracts people for many motives. Some are looking to settle and create a future for themselves and their families, while others are seeking a retreat from society and their problems. Many are specialized in clearing land, and after having sown grass for cattle, put fences and built a small house they sell the 'farm' and go on to another frontier place where they can start anew. Then there were those who were only interested in land as an object of speculation, who after invading land would seek to negotiate its sale and do the same elsewhere.

One important effect these invasions produced was that all absentee owners returned to the settlement, including those who had not been invaded. As expected they organized themselves around the 'ghost' committee and started putting pressure on the regional office to show their strength and support them by ousting the invaders. In effect, Moisés took action to evict them, but with little success as it seemed almost impossible to prevent the same squatters from occupying the plot again the very same day, provided they had the support of other settlers who were ready to testify on their behalf. This had already been experienced in the case of a young settler who had

actually lost a legal suit filed against him by the legal owner but who, on the initiative of a large group was resettled. Subsequently the case was reopened, and the settler won occupancy rights by the mere fact that he still remained on the plot. Given this precedent and the fact that not only Diego but also José and others in Macadamia had in the past been involved in organising invasions, Moisés realized that it seemed rather improbable that legal action, swift or otherwise, could be enforced if the squatter could muster a degree of communal support.

In effect, Diego was able to prove his point: without the clear support of the community little could be accomplished. The struggle then would be won by the party most entitled to talk in the name of the community, not by those having the capacity to enforce the law with the help of an intervening party. Diego very aptly utilized this argument in a meeting of the red committee convened to discuss the new developments.

In this meeting, after giving a speech on the need for communal solidarity and unity, he referred to the 'new settlers' whom he welcomed and asked to cooperate with the community. And he asserted that it was important that the settlers live within the community. As he argued,

"with these new *compañeros* we'll have more strength for initiating new productive projects. (Then he started to list a few agricultural production plans and made some remarks about the organization). Also thanks to these friends who come here to live with their families the school will not be closed for lack of children. We should welcome these families who need land and who are ready to make the necessary sacrifices in order to make it productive".

Yet a week later, two of the four squatters left without, to my knowledge, good reason, indicating that there had been some sort of negotiation between Diego and the owners of the plots. (In effect, one of these plots belonged to José).

Given the IDA's incapacity to intervene in favour of the 'ghost' committee by evicting the squatters, José organized a counter-move. He proceeded to invade a number of plots belonging to members of the red committee. Also Diego's plot was invaded. This invasion, however, did not have the expected results.

Diego's plot was invaded one day when he was in Guápiles. When returning he had a long conversation with the squatter and apparently he was able to convince him that he had been deceived and that he would never obtain the necessary support of the community. After a few days, then, the squatter moved into another abandoned plot. A second squatter invaded the plot of a settler who had converted to evangelism and who had left the settlement for the lowlands in order to dedicate himself to the church. He was known as a dedicated community member, yet after talking to Diego he decided to strike an arrangement with the squatter. A third squatter who had a long history of participating in invasions (among them that of Neguév) and was known as a troublesome character - a drinker and quarreller - moved to the village square when he noticed that he would not obtain much help from other settlers. Eventually he left the settlement when Diego assured him that his chances to obtain a legal title were nil.

It was apparent by then that Diego was regaining the initiative. The IDA administration was not showing the same eagerness as before to 'normalize' the situation in Tierragrande-Macadamia, and people were starting to feel that a number of communal works were not being carried out. The road, for example, had never been so bad since the day it was constructed. The school committee had organized a *turno* recently in order to collect funds for repairing the school. Neither José nor the other members of the 'ghost' committee participated in the organization. (In fact, they did

not even go). Diego, by contrast, contributed both his labour and money, thereby working together with people who had turned against him. In effect, I was present in this *turno* when one of the settlers who had accused Diego most vehemently in public of being corrupt (Javier), attempted a rapprochement with him with a view to reconstituting the old committee.

The 'ghost' committee changes strategy

Every year José went back to his home-town of Turrialba for a few months to help his father with the coffee harvest. This provided the 'ghost' committee with a good opportunity to change its leader. Before José left it was decided that Chepe Gamboa would deputise for him while he was away. Chepe had a *finca* on a fringe of land between the settlement and the national forest reserve, which he and others claimed did not yet belong to the forest reserve. He presented himself as a representative of a powerful group of land entrepreneurs who had *fincas* on this fringe. Chepe was rather open in demonstrating his interest in working for the 'ghost' committee, arguing that although he was not formally a settler he had good reasons to be involved in the affairs of the settlement. He explicitly stated that he was interested in the extension of the road upwards. This he said would also benefit the settlers as it would stimulate the growth of a village. In addition he made it clear that he could make an important contribution to the committee due to his close relationships to the Rojas family (he and his brother had worked for them for the best part of their lives) and through his close friendships with politicians in Guácimo. Thus he started to talk about the need to take political action in order to press the IDA to take action.

In a last meeting of the 'ghost' committee that I attended, together with Mario Green, it became apparent that the members had lost faith in the IDA. In fact they reproached Mario and the institution bitterly for not having carried out the promises made. Mario, then, had to take recourse to his usual tactics of deflecting criticism.

In conclusion, the committee gave up all pretensions to being a representative of the whole community and became a loose alliance of differing groups with different interests for putting pressure on the bureaucratic system in order to achieve specific goals by way of political negotiation.

7.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this last section I will discuss how Diego accounted for the whole confrontation between his committee and the IDA. Once I drove him to Guápiles after having spent a few days in the Big House. Having had a few drinks in a bar he demonstrated an unusual openness in his assessment of the whole situation. So far he had always expressed himself in ideological terms and had been very careful not to criticize anyone on personal grounds, whether his rivals within the settlement or the functionaries.

According to him the leaders of the 'ghost' committee lacked skills. José, for example, had never been able to gain the trust and appreciation of the community. He had just behaved like a boss. Several settlers, simple and uneducated people had felt deeply insulted by him. Neither had he been able to gain the trust of the Rojas.

With regard to Mario, the social worker, he argued that Mario had believed that he could destroy his red committee but he had been mistaken. He argued that he had a big advantage over him,

"I still think and talk like a "peasant" and Mario does not. Functionaries usually have finished high school and maybe one or two years of higher education. I have finished high-school, and in addition I am still a peasant. I know how to speak as a peasant, whereas Mario talks like a functionary".

He argued that one central element in his strategy of resistance had been to deliberately neglect all communal activities in the settlement - such as the maintenance of the road, the school, etc. - after the formation of the 'ghost' committee, as well as the relationships with other state agencies and institutions. He knew that those characters such as José did not have the commitment and experience to do that kind of work properly. Thus JAPDEVA and other institutions refused to deal with two committees which were representing at the same time one community. Previously they received help from the World Food Programme. This support had been discontinued after José had called them and told them to channel the food through him instead of through the existing communal organization. They grew suspicious and stopped the delivery. In short, José and his allies had not been able to establish relationships of trust with officials, not to mention setting up their own network within the institutions.

However, he argued that his ability to resist was not so much based on his knowledge of the personal characteristics of his rivals but on a political analysis of the IDA. As he put it,

"A lot of ignorant peasants have let themselves be deceived by them, but I know that the IDA has no money. These new projects are not being financed by the IDA but by international agencies, and the IDA has not the right to decide about the distribution of these funds. On the other hand, the IDA is a political institution with a political function, and it has a special relationship with the government party. Thus before every election a lot of negotiations become possible".

He also argued that in view of the coming elections the IDA's officials would be forced to negotiate, for "they could not permit losing the votes of the peasants". These negotiations, he explained, were conducted in a global way and were related to the commitment of the leftist opposition groups not to disrupt the electoral processes by marches, invasions, etc. which could embarrass the party in power. Related to this, ambitious politicians were ready to "buy" leftist votes by establishing alliances with them. In fact, he argued that he had very good relationships with the local politicians of the two most important parties.

From Diego's point of view the Regional Office of the IDA had broken an important rule, that which prohibited the institution of forming committees. In addition he argued that they had indulged in political persecution by taking position against the FENAC. He made that clear to the Executive President during a meeting he and other FENAC representatives had had some time ago. According to him the IDA's Executive President had expressed his concern about this and promised an investigation.

7.7 Conclusion

How did this case of intervention in the frontier finish? Fernando Campos, the Regional Director concluded that Tierragrande had still a long path to go before it was pacified. Accordingly Tierragrande was assigned a low priority. It was decided that the social worker and the *agrarista* would take turns in continuing the neutralization process.

However, it is not surprising that they did not feel much enthusiasm for doing so, and after a few visits they ceased to show up.

Thus the IDA's attempt to marginalize Diego proved to be much more difficult than expected, and for several reasons. To begin with, they exacerbated contradictions and potential divisions within the community, with the result that a great deal of tension was generated in the everyday life of a relatively small group of settlers. Furthermore, IDA intervention proved to be weak due to the contradictions apparent between the ideology of intervention, as displayed in the paternalism and related theories on the development of an entrepreneurial spirit - and the operational styles of the front-line workers who had to deal with the local dynamics of communal conflict. Finally, the strategy of resistance and confrontation followed by Diego proved to be highly successful as it showed up the weakness of the IDA and its dependence on local negotiations.

In presenting a case study in which the interplay of intervention and intervention-coping stands central, an attempt was made to gain further insight into the contradictory social meanings which emerged in the course of a set of negotiations and confrontations between a radical leader and the IDA. In this way an attempt was made to further problematize the concept of intervention, deconstructing it in order to show that 'intervention' and 'intervention-coping', instead of being an objective process, are social constructions shaped by the clashes between different sets of social actors. Such clashes, I argued, can be studied by examining how, and in relation to which struggles, they endow with local meaning discourses of democracy and community.

In conclusion; in this chapter resistance as one of several intervention-coping strategies was discussed. Concerning the conceptual framework proposed for analysing such strategies the following can be said: Diego, the communist leader, made a clever use of the knowledge accumulated in the settlement regarding how to deal with government institutions and bureaucrats. This practical knowledge was harnessed by a radical world-view which encouraged adopting a critical attitude towards state intervention. This world-view provided a language through which the discourses of 'community' and 'democracy' were given local meaning. Through the involvement with a leftist peasant union which had important political connections at the national level Diego and his *compañeros* could draw upon a social network and modes of collective activity which facilitated access to key resources while maintaining a degree of local autonomy, and which provided the social basis for practices of enrolment. Enrolment here, and in contrast with the former chapter, entailed resisting the IDA's attempts of introducing a new mode of institution-client relations. To that end the discourses of democracy and community were deployed so as to politicize such relationships. To that end existing relations with high-leading IDA functionaries (e.g. the Executive President and the Board) were used.

CHAPTER 8

MANIPULATION AS AN INTERVENTION-COPING STRATEGY

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the third and last strategy of intervention-coping, that of manipulation, by analysing how the discourse of democracy is deployed in order to mobilize people and attract resources. The chapter focuses on a water-provision or aqueduct project initiated by settlers of a locality that was part of the old Tierragrande *hacienda* and covers an area close to the mountain forest fringe lying at 1,500 metres, referred to as La Isleta and an area at a lower attitude called Las Delicias. After an outline of the local context, the inauguration of the project is described so as to show how the discourse of 'democracy' is put to work in these distant frontier areas. Second, a number of critical events surrounding the construction of the aqueduct are discussed. In the last two sections of the chapter the history of the project is analysed from the point of view of two main social actors who were involved in the project, a social worker of the Aqueduct and Sewage Institute and a preacher/entrepreneur. The third section relates how the project became a success thanks to a tactical alliance between them; the social worker was able to secure the involvement of the institution, in spite of the increasing doubts of his superiors concerning the viability of the project, and the preacher developed a social network in order to attract additional resources. Special attention is paid to how this preacher/entrepreneur develops skills for mobilizing local people and attracting institutional resources without getting committed to any institutional or political project. It is thereby shown that in the process of enrolling a variety of actors in the aqueduct project he is able to create a reputation as an able organiser and negotiator, as a spokesman of poor settlers in the frontier, and last but not least, to pursue his own entrepreneurial aspirations.

This chapter, then, focuses on how social actors, such as the preacher, utilize a discourse of 'democracy and citizenship' in order to expand their social networks within the bureaucracy.

How Tierragrande-La Isleta became a case study

Before proceeding let me relate how I came to hear about the particular problems of this area. Once, on my way to the neighbouring settlement sector of Tierragrande-Macadamia with a bunch of officials, the conversation turned to the subject of Ignacio, the preacher who had played a special role in the construction of the aqueduct in La

Isleta/Las Delicias. Mario Green, the social worker, observed that this preacher at the time was busy in building a reputation within the village of Pocora where he had recently moved. Yet, he already had something of a reputation since his nick-name was the "the preacher from the waist and up". The reason for this was that the preacher, once pursued a young and very beautiful girl who attended his church. He made many efforts to seduce her, yet, she did not want to surrender. She once confided her problem to a girl-friend of hers who advised her to make it clear to him that as a preacher he was committing a grave sin. So she did. The preacher, then, answered to her, "my love, I should have told you that I am only a preacher from the waist and up". Since then he was called behind his back "the preacher from the waist and up". Villagers used to make fun of him by worrying about his waist when inquiring about his health. For me this anecdote was not only amusing but intriguing as I came to know more about La Isleta.

The relationship between the Neguev Regional Office and La Isleta/Las Delicias was a complex one. In the beginning the front-line workers and Fernando Campos would refer to the settlers of these localities as model beneficiaries, poor settlers who had been able to construct an aqueduct with a minimum of state resources. Reference was made to their peaceful character and their admirable capacity to work together. Later, in the course of the IDA's involvement with them the image changed. It appeared that serious problems between various groups of settlers existed. The most vocal leader, the preacher Ignacio, started to claim all kinds of resources and services from the IDA, such as the use of a truck for the transport of sand to La Isleta, the extension of land titles to settlers, etc. Ignacio, in addition, could be rather nasty to particular front-line workers when they did not deliver the services he expected from them. Thus at a given moment he started to spread the rumour that the *agrarista* was corrupt, that the IDA social worker was only interested in working with political friends, that the *técnicos* were a bunch of lazy characters, that the Regional Director of the IDA was not willing to keep his promises, etc.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the officials' image of La Isleta/Las Delicias as a peaceful and unproblematic locality changed radically. Evidence was produced by the *agrarista* for the fact that a sector of the population, Las Delicias, wanted to separate and form their own settlement and that Ignacio, the preacher, had been practically expelled from Las Delicias by his rivals. Fernando Campos, the IDA Regional Director, on one of the last conversations we had, pointed out to me the difficulties of working with settlers belonging to religious sects due to their tendency to neglect their farms, and their proclivity to be manipulated by doubtful characters.

The local and historical context

La Isleta-Tierragrande, as mentioned, is located at the fringes of the mountain forest. It neighbours on the younger Las Delicias settlement sector, which lies at a lower altitude and closer to the lowlands. With the construction of a road upwards which traverses both settlements, the settlements became geographically closely connected, so much that La Isleta became an extension of Las Delicias. Before the construction of the road, La Isleta could only be reached through the neighbouring Macadamia settlement. There are no physical boundaries between La Isleta and Las Delicias, except that the former lies further up the road. In fact, the IDA stopped making a formal distinction between them, especially when the officials learned that both localities shared one aqueduct. The whole area was denominated by them La Isleta.

Yet, important differences exist between La Isleta and Las Delicias. Las Delicias is larger and consists of fifty plots, to La Isleta's thirty, and it is more populated. Due to

its vicinity to the lowlands, agriculture in Las Delicias is more profitable. In addition many settlers there work on neighbouring *haciendas* and thus are not forced to search for work in the plantations in the lowlands. La Isleta, in contrast, makes a depopulated impression as many settlers visit their plots only at weekends or on holidays. Of the 30 plots only 12 are inhabited for large parts of the year, whereas in Las Delicias this is the case for the majority of the plots.

In La Isleta the majority of the settlers are evangelicals of the same denomination as Ignacio, their preacher, whereas in Las Delicias half of the population consists of catholics, and the evangelicals there, belong to a different church from that of Ignacio. It is also known that many settlers in Las Delicias have leftist sympathies. In addition, the localities have quite different histories.

La Isleta was settled spontaneously from 1973 onwards as part of the colonisation of the forests that was then taking place. This was independent of the peasant union that organized most of the invasions in the area, though in the beginning there had been a strong union presence through one of the first settlers, Cristóbal, a member of the communist peasant union (FENAC) who, with the support of the union, undertook the job of parcelization and distribution of plots. Later this settler converted to protestantism and severed all links with the union. From then on, he became very committed to disseminating the Word of God all over the area.

Las Delicias, on the other hand, was part of the huge Bremen *hacienda* and was sold to the IDA by the owners, the influential Rojas family, to be distributed to squatters who had invaded a neighbouring *hacienda* called La Foresta. By giving squatters of La Foresta plots in Las Delicias, a protracted conflict which was acquiring dangerous political proportions (one of the owners was an important politician within the *Liberación* party) came to an end. This conflict had lasted for more than two years and the squatters had been evicted several times by the police and their huts set on fire. This experience created a strong bond between the leading squatters who 'sustained the struggle' during the whole period.

These Foresta invasion leaders had had a long history as banana plantation workers and were ideologically influenced by leftist unions. They could count on the organizational and legal support of leftist organisations such as FENAC and UPAGRA, yet they were not attached to any of these unions. They had always played an important role in communal organizations in Las Delicias, and initially also in the aqueduct project. Lately, however, they had been losing ground in the community, as they were considered by many as too radical and too conflictive. Furthermore one of them, Báltazar, who had taken the initiative for the aqueduct project had seriously damaged his reputation as a dedicated and hard-working local leader by spending the monies of the community in bars during his official trips to the lowlands and San José. Báltazar, a teetotaler at home appeared not to be able to resist the temptation of liquor when leaving the settlement. In fact, Ignacio, the preacher of La Isleta made clever use of this situation to promote himself as the only leader who was able to negotiate with state institutions in a responsible way.

This background information helps to understand the apparent cleavages between the people from 'above' (La Isleta) and those from 'below' (Las Delicias), between the 'democrats' and the 'communists', between the catholics and the evangelicals.

It was suggested that the aqueduct project was a local initiative. In fact, it was a response to the increasing difficulties to get water for the houses, especially in Las Delicias. Las Delicias and La Isleta are separated from other settlements and farms by two deep seated rivers. After the road came many settlers in las Delicias moved their houses towards it, and it then became quite laborious to get water, the more so as the

road lies higher than the river. In La Isleta the lack of drinking water was less of a problem as various streams criss-cross the settlement.

An additional reason for establishing an aqueduct was the fear that due to the deforestation of the area the lower reaches of the rivers would not be a sufficient source of water. This was already the case after a few days of dry weather. Thus it was thought that water sources uphill, in La Isleta, should be sought for provision in the future.

8.2 The Inauguration of the Aqueduct

The inauguration of the aqueduct besides being my first encounter with the community at large was an important event. It provided an opportunity for studying how characters such as Ignacio created an image of these distant and poor frontier settlement areas and of himself, as law-abiding and religious farmers who were only able to resist the communist ideology through an alliance with the state, and of how the discourse of democracy was employed by intermediaries such as Ignacio, by institutional managers and by local politicians.

The inauguration was organized by Ignacio, the evangelical preacher, and president of the communal aqueduct project. It was done with style and was meant to become a major event. He had invited various leading persons personally and showed much pride in saying that one of the two major Presidential candidates of the *Liberación* party would be present. Also, both the MP's for Limon were invited as well as local politicians and leaders of the communal associations of the municipalities of Pocora and Guácimo, the Regional Directors of government agencies and Line Ministries and two of the Rojas brothers (the owners of the Bremen *hacienda*). To me this sounded very far-reaching and implausible, given the fact that La Isleta and Las Delicias are small settlements far-out in the frontier, difficult to reach and with a highly uncomfortable road. Ignacio involved many persons in the organization of the ceremony, within and outside the community (I for example became a driver for that day). Food was prepared by women from the community, all of them belonging to his religious congregation.

When I arrived at the school where the ceremony of inauguration was going to take place at 12'o clock, most of the guests had arrived. Among them were Orlando Avendaño, MP for Liberacion accompanied by his two assistants, a few municipal and cooperative local leaders of the same party, Fernando Campos, the Regional Director of the IDA, the Regional Directors of the Ministry of Transport, the engineer of the aqueduct agency (AyA) in charge of this project, the priest of Guácimo and various local supporters of the Liberacion party. The potential presidential candidate himself was absent, but had sent his excuses via the MP. Also absent were the Rojas family (who paid for the pigs slaughtered for the meal and for part of the drink), and the General Manager of the IDA, Don Roberto Arcos.

The first to speak was Ignacio, the preacher, who in a large and eloquent speech thanked god, the institutions, the politicians and the unity of the community for the accomplishment of the project. He spoke about the difficulties they had had to surmount to conquer nature, to persuade "our skeptical brothers" of the feasibility of the project, to overcome all sorts of "coordination" problems with the institutions and local authorities. When talking about the latter he specially thanked the AyA and the MP Avendaño for their involvement with the community. He also thanked a whole array of institutions (the CNP, the Ministry of Labour, etc.) for their help. Regarding the IDA

he remarked that although the settlement came under its jurisdiction it was the institution that had contributed least. However, he added that now with the dynamic leadership of the *ingeniero* Fernando Campos they expected more interest on their part.

Three things struck me about the speech. First, he used a religious-military metaphor for "development", with explicit reference to the crusades by speaking about the faith in progress, the struggle for appropriating the local natural resources and need to act as a united army with a unity of purpose. Second, when he spoke about the community he did it in general, 'ideological' terms. Thus, he did not mention the various committees, the work-groups, neither the role of other leaders. In fact, it seemed as if he saw himself as the embodiment of the community. Third, his demeanour was not the usual one of a peasant who publicly thanks the institutions for something given to them. On the contrary, the project was portrayed by him as the joint accomplishment of the community and the institution. Hence, he took it as one of his tasks to assess the contributions of the various agencies and authorities. In truth, this was the first time that I saw Ignacio in action, employing a language of responsibility in which the rights and obligations of state officials and those of settlers were discussed. Indeed, this was the way he gave significance to the discourse of democracy in the frontier.

Next, the MP Avendaño gave a long and emotional pep-talk in which he referred to the 'peasant's' spirit of sacrifice, the expected integration of this area to the central plateau and the capital city as a result of the construction of the new motorway from San José to Guápiles and the extension of secondary roads. Then he talked about his role as a member of parliament to promote the development of every village, not because of political interests but because of his loyalty to the people who chose him, and his patriotic interest. Finally he painted a rather idyllic picture of the future of this area as a wealthy coffee producing area. He also praised Ignacio as an excellent and progressive representative of the community.

Finally the AyA engineer in charge of the project spoke. He talked about the satisfaction it gave to inaugurate an aqueduct like that one, which had offered so many technical difficulties in a rather inaccessible area. In this connection he also mentioned the special role of Ignacio as an intermediary (*enlace*) between the institution and the village. Finally, he spoke about the requirement that the project's beneficiaries pay the monthly maintenance dues. He also emphasized the communities' obligation to preserve the water-springs and not to indulge in any form of deforestation. Next the aqueduct was formally inaugurated. The anthem was sung and afterwards the catholic priest enacted the official inauguration. Subsequently, he gave a short speech, during which he touched on two themes. First he voiced his concern about deforestation and the consequences it had for erosion and water-supplies in the lowland villages. He emphasized the need to think within a long-term perspective. And, second, he talked about the need to overcome religious differences in order to achieve the necessary unity for realizing the development of the area. Thus he remarked, "I know there are people from various religions here. My intention here is to thank God, not to suggest a particular view of how he should be served". In this way he made clear that his presence should not be interpreted as an attempt to divide the community by supporting one segment of the community against another one. It struck me that Ignacio was absent during the formal inauguration of the aqueduct by the catholic priest. He had made his way to the women who were cooking and kept busy rearranging the chairs and tables for the meal.

The tables had been reserved for the guests (among whom I was classified) and we were served by the women. Ignacio made sure that everyone was treated well. I

sat next to the Regional Director of the IDA. We started to compare Macadamia to La Isleta. He argued that the latter had the luck that it could count on someone like Ignacio who made so many efforts to maintain constructive relations with the institutions. He remarked that insofar as they had dealt with him the experience had been quite positive. He emphasized that Ignacio was not pursuing any political goals, and even less those of a divisionary kind, in contrast to Diego Casas, the communist leader from Macadamia, "who lived off forced contributions from the community and received training and counselling from people trained in Cuba".

The discourse of democracy and the everyday conflicts of the project

This event is interesting as we see a particular way of talking about 'development' in the frontier, in terms of an alliance between people and the state. Mention was made to the usual themes: the necessity of local cooperation, of a good relationship between settlers and the regional politicians, the necessity to overcome petty local conflicts and unite behind the larger objective of creating development. Yet, this way of talking about development as the outcome of a relationship between settlers and the state concealed a number of conflicts which had taken place between settlers and institutions, and among settlers themselves. Thus it appeared that Ignacio had been able to exclude other major participants in the project from the attribution of honour. It did not take long before I confronted an image of the aqueduct project which was very different from that which came across during the ceremony, as a conflictive if not traumatic experience.

After the meal I approached two settlers who had participated in the aqueduct project from its inception, Pablo, an evangelical, and Adolfo, a catholic who was the catechist in Las Delicias. They had been the leaders of two of the four working groups that had been formed. As we talked about the relations between the various groups they were ready to discuss the various conflicts which surrounded the implementation of the aqueduct project. Yet, they said they were proud of the fact that, in contrast with other settlements, cooperation between evangelicals and catholics had been possible there.

As I expressed my surprise about the fact that Ignacio, at the ceremony, had received all the honours for the completion of the aqueduct, and that other leaders had not been mentioned during the ceremony, Adolfo and Pablo claimed that there had been only two good leaders, who could not get along with each other. These were Ignacio and Báltazar. Since the latter could not accept that all the honours should go to Ignacio, he was not present at the ceremony. He had quarrelled with Ignacio the day before about the way the inauguration was to be organized. Anyway, Báltazar was discredited because he had diverted too much money from the committee. Furthermore, Adolfo gave his personal opinion of Ignacio,

"It should be recognized that without him the aqueduct would not have been completed. He is very dedicated and does not rest until he has reached his aims. Many people criticize him, but the real reason for that is envy. It is true that he is not a cultivator. No one has seen him with a spade in his hand. But the truth is that if I or another *compañero* is sent to an institution to arrange something we are not taken seriously. Ignacio with his voice and his massive appearance cannot be ignored. He just would plant his leg behind the door and no one would stop him until he has finished his story. We could not do something like that as peasants, we are better at doing physical work."

This statement struck me as odd later when I learned that Adolfo had been one of the main opponents of Ignacio during the implementation of the project, questioning him for the fact that he did not contribute labour.

At the same time Adolfo and Pablo agreed that the history of the project had been very different from the way Ignacio had portrayed it in his speech. For example the aqueduct had never been an affair of the whole community since a large group did not participate in a significant way. The reason for this was that there was a lack of faith by many, not only in its feasibility but also in the way it was managed. At present, these people felt left out as there was a whole discussion going on regarding the conditions under which people could be connected to the aqueduct. Also the idea that Ignacio was a communal leader in both settlements was in their opinion wrong. Although he was respected in Las Delicias he was not taken seriously by most. They agreed that he was only considered as a legitimate leader by the settlers of La Isleta. In short, his wider reputation as a representative of La Isleta/Las Delicias was based on his ability to attract funds for this particular project.

Moreover, as I was told later, Ignacio was quite a controversial character, not least because of his role in relation to the aqueduct. Thus, out of the many springs available for feeding the aqueduct with water, the one that was chosen was on the largest of his two plots, the one that was located outside the settlement on the forest reserve, where it is prohibited to farm. But the integration of this area in the settlement area through the aqueduct, in fact, made it easier for entrepreneurs such as Lorenzo to lay legal claim to the land. Furthermore, it appeared later that this spring had not the capacity to supply water to Las Delicias - which lies lower - after a few days without rain, as the spring would dry up. For that reason it became necessary, halfway the construction of the aqueduct, to search for another spring which would increase water supply.

Conflictive issues surrounding the aqueduct project

After probing further into the history of the aqueduct project the following points of conflict came to the fore. It was already mentioned that the aqueduct responded to a need of the settlers from Las Delicias, more than those from La Isleta. However, the participation of the settlers from La Isleta proved to be critical to the project, as water springs were sought and founded at the higher reaches of this settlement. But there had been lingering doubts on the part of settlers in Las Delicias about the choice of water springs in La Isleta, and precisely in a plot belonging to Ignacio. The suspicion existed that Ignacio had bribed the *técnico* from the Rural Aqueduct Programme to choose that spring as the most suited. For one thing, Ignacio had certainly accompanied him during his examination of the various springs in the area. No attempts were made to find a spring closer to Las Delicias. The choice for a faraway spring implied that the participation of settlers in both Las Delicias and La Isleta was needed. So far little cooperation existed between the two settlements. The evangelicals in La Isleta had the reputation of being reluctant to work with people of a different religious persuasion. But, one thing was clear, Ignacio in his capacity of local preacher was able to mobilize them. This gave Ignacio an enormous influence in the further implementation of the project. As noted, the settlers from La Isleta were poorer than those from Las Delicias. Some worked on plantations in the lowlands, others lived in poverty on their plots. In contrast, many settlers in Las Delicias had the possibility to find work in neighbouring *haciendas* which was easier than walking the 12 kilometers uphill to the spring and back everyday, which they had to do when working on the aqueduct project. Thus many paid settlers in La Isleta to do their part of the work. For

the latter this was a very advantageous situation. For the settlers in Las Delicias it was a costly one. In addition, Ignacio was able to lay claim to food from the World Food Programme for them, and for some time, he was able to get help by establishing a connection with a Public Works Programme that paid (low) wages to poor people who worked on communal infrastructural projects. In this way he could ensure the participation of the settlers of La Isleta.

But the project became a source of discontent and frustration to settlers in Las Delicias who had to spend, in their eyes, a disproportionate amount of energy and money on it. For the settlers in La Isleta, in contrast, the project was a welcome source of wages and food under circumstances in which few alternatives existed.

The relationship with the Aqueduct and Sewage Institution (AyA) was also very tiresome. The spring chosen was located in a very inaccessible place, in the midst of rocky soils where it was very difficult to dig. The engineer of the Aqueduct Institution insisted that a specific depth had to be reached for laying the tubes, but every additional centimeter was for the participants a huge task. Several times conflicts arose between the engineer and settlers over the technical requirements of the project.

A few participants of the aqueduct project from Las Delicias, inspired by Adolfo, started to exert pressure on the AyA to start searching for a different water spring, one that was nearer to their settlement. This idea was totally opposed by Ignacio and the social worker of the AyA who had been involved in the project from the beginning, although for different reasons as we will see. Ignacio responded to accusations that he was only interested in benefitting from the project by renouncing his offices on the Aqueduct Implementation Committee, but he also convinced the officers of the World Food Programme not to deliver food to the settlement. As a result the project came to a standstill and he was asked to return to the implementation committee.

There was another crisis when it appeared that the water spring chosen would dry up if it failed to rain for a few days. Then, almost when the project was finished, another spring was sought and found, this time on the lower part of La Isleta, not far from Las Delicias. A new connection was built to that spring, with the result that water supply to Las Delicias and the lower parts of La Isleta became more constant.

But this became another source of conflict as some project participants in Las Delicias, again under the inspiration of Adolfo, proposed to divide the aqueduct in two. According to this plan Las Delicias would be serviced by the new spring whereas La Isleta would receive water from the older one. Adolfo argued that this was a necessary step as the settlers from La Isleta refused to participate in the maintenance committee and to pay the maintenance tax¹. Again Ignacio and Juan Manuel, the AyA social worker, had to intervene as this entailed that the first aqueduct would be neglected and would soon deteriorate beyond repair. Ignacio had to convene a meeting in La Isleta to explain to the settlers there that if they did not pay the tax all the work of the aqueduct would get lost. Interestingly, Ignacio and Juan Manuel received the support from the leftist, marginalized, leaders of Las Delicias who argued that the aqueduct should remain undivided since it was the product of the hard work of both settlements.

In conclusion, the aqueduct project was not an undisputed success as conflicts remained after its completion. Indeed, everytime that it was thought that the first spring was not delivering enough water the AyA social worker was called to the settlement and made responsible for it.

¹In fact, many closed the connection with the aqueduct and went to the river with buckets to fetch water. In this way they could avoid paying the taxes.

8.3 Creating Space for Maneuvre: The AyA Social Worker

The aqueduct project, by now, seemed rather puzzling to me. I had the impression that it had not resulted in the higher level of community unity that everyone, the IDA officials in charge of community development as well as many settlers, thought was a precondition for local development. Apparently the community was as divided as ever and the only clear winner appeared to be a preacher who had been successful in improving his reputation as a moderate fighter for the welfare of poor people in the frontier and a capable intermediary. He had also extended the project to a plot in the forest that he wanted to appropriate. One person who helped me greatly to gain further insight into the history of the project and the communal dynamics that surrounded it was the social worker of the rural aqueduct programme of the AyA, Juan Manuel².

Juan Manuel was a communicative person and, what for me was more important, he had a very special interest in the project of La Isleta and he liked to talk about it. In our first interview, he commented, "La Isleta has been for us a very special project, a project that many of us experienced as a headache. However, for me it was a very important one, for I learned a lot about how to deal with such communities and with the institution".

The project had unique characteristics. First, it had been set up in a more sparsely settled area than they had expected it to be. Second, the community was a very poor one, with no agricultural production for the market, and consequently, it lacked resources. The rule is that the community provides some of the resources for the project, at least the labour, local material like sand and food and shelter for the foreman in charge of the work (*maestro de obras*). Third, as a forest reserve the place was actually not suited to agriculture. Fourth, the settlement had serious problems related to community organization. "When I came first to the settlement, said Juan Manuel, "the situation was so bad that the people from the lower area did not want to cooperate with those from the upper end, for they saw themselves as belonging to different settlements. I told them that the difference between the communities was only a semantic issue and I suggested that they choose a common name".

He also argued that there was a lack of communal identity as people came from all over the country and there was a presence of various evangelical sects. But despite this La Isleta had tremendous luck, for they got priority over other communities with more resources. The reason for this was purely conjunctural, he argued. On top of all this there was Ignacio, whom Juan Manuel considered "a necessary evil" (*un mal necesario*). To my surprise, he did not consider this a bad project, neither for the institution nor for the community. Replying to my suggestion that the project had not led to more effective modes of local organisation in La Isleta/Las Delicias he asserted,

"I do not have the impression that community organisation is weak, on the contrary. Anyway, that is not the issue. The experience has led to the emergence of many young and dedicated leaders, good organizers, and that is for a community crucial. This project has given them a lot of self-respect. It is natural

²It is the task of such workers to evaluate the organizational conditions for the construction of aqueducts. In addition they have to assist the communities to establish construction and maintenance committees, and to train clients on the legal and financial obligations of the committees (taxes, etc). Finally they have to raise consciousness concerning environmental issues.

that conflicts arise between people in a community, but these are mostly inter-personal problems. The project has changed the outlook of these people".

Thus, he pinpointed that over the same period the school was finished and that the work on the road had continued. Juan Manuel recalls how the project was initiated,

"Ignacio one day appeared in my office in San José together with one of the leaders of Las Delicias. He claimed that so many kilometres of trenches had been dug for water-tubes and that they only needed the tubes and a foreman to finish the aqueduct. We were amazed, never before had we got such an offer. They had been digging a lot but in reality not nearly as much as they told us. Moreover, the largest part had to be straightened and deepened".

And they did have an amazing piece of luck. At about that time there was a shift in the institution's management. As in every institution, the new Chief Engineer of the Department of Rural Aqueducts, where Juan Manuel worked, wanted to prove that he could improve the efficiency of the programme. It had been 80% of what had been planned and he wanted to show that 120% was possible. Within that context the project seemed extremely attractive. It was decided to accord it priority over all other approved projects. Normally it would have taken at least a year just to have a project approved.

However, the community leaders had been passing incorrect information. According to Ignacio they had enough resources and labour, but they only had the commitment of a few institutions. Yet, Juan Manuel argued that in Costa Rica it is almost impossible to get hold of these resources on time, when the community really needs them. As he put it,

"In fact, they deceived us. At the inception of a project a base-study is made by functionaries from the technical division. They examine the mineralogical, hydrological situation, and gather data on the size of the population, living conditions, etc. The report of the study revealed that in the upper end alone, 30 families were living. In reality not even 12 were living there, and most of them not even the whole year round. The *técnico* who undertook the study was misguided by Ignacio. Probably he did not want to make the effort to visit all the plots, so he did not check the veracity of Ignacio's claims".

Juan Manuel recognized that he carried part of the blame. According to the procedure the social worker can stop a project if the community is not considered to be organizationally mature for such a project. But as Juan Manuel asserted, "I have lived in Siquirres for a large part of my youth and I love the Atlantic region. I know that the image that exists of people there being backward and lazy is wrong. Thus I wanted to give them a chance".

On his first encounter with the community he already realized that there were serious communal problems. It had been agreed that the meeting would be at the upper end, in La Isleta, but upon arriving he learned that one of the leaders of the lower side, Adolfo, had convinced the people from his sector to hold the meeting in Las Delicias. Well, remarked Juan Manuel "my experience with communities is that if you lose the first battle you will lose the last. So I told them that if the meeting was not in La Isleta there would be no project at all". In short, some leaders from below did not want to have anything to do with those above. Both groups accused each other of being lazy and of not really living on the farms. Yet, for Juan Manuel it was obvious that the communities had to work together, for all the springs were located in La Isleta and

most of the available labour was in Las Delicias. In addition, he stressed that the work on the aqueduct was almost inhuman. The blocks, pipes and bags of sand had to be carried on the shoulders. The project's schedule had been calculated with 60 men in mind. However, there were never more than 40. At times there were no more than 25. That was the period that the project entered its worst crisis. At that moment in time, it was the settlers from the higher community, La Isleta, who carried the burden. Juan Manuel asserts,

"The error was mine as I had overestimated the possibilities of the community. I reckoned that when the project gained impetus more people would join. This occurred, but later, and less rapidly than I had expected. On various occasions when I realized that it was advancing too slowly I seriously considered suspending it. For it is highly inefficient to have a foreman and machinery working at low capacity. But, I knew that such a measure would demoralize them too much".

At one moment he convened a meeting with the entire community to discuss the problem. There he proposed that the people sign a document declaring that they committed themselves to finish the project. That document had two functions. First it served as a justification towards his chief for continuing the projects. And, second, he could use it as a means of (moral) pressure against the community. Yet, the document itself had no legal value whatsoever. Meanwhile his relationship with the chief engineer, which up to then had been excellent, had cooled down. During evaluation meetings in which social workers and engineers participated, Juan Manuel was accused of identifying too closely with local communities to the detriment of the institution. In short, they were giving him the blame for the apparent failure of the project. Regarding these clashes he recalls,

"I was able to bring in a lot of important arguments in the sense that it is not always possible to predict the organizational capacity of a community. I came with a lot of examples of other, richer, communities, which had nevertheless proved to be problematic. Moreover, I brought evidence that neither is technical knowledge infallible".

The latter was a good argument because from a given moment doubts arose on the part of both the institution and the settlers over the carrying capacity of the spring chosen. The *técnicos* insisted that the measurements were right and that shortages of water were due to extremely long dry periods and changes in the geological structure, etc. Juan Manuel remarked that one advantage he had in those discussions was that he knew much more about local conditions. His strategy, meanwhile, was to concentrate on other, larger and more promising projects in order to recover his reputation as a valuable functionary.

At the same time he continued to help the community by other means. From a colleague he learnt about a new programme of public works, set up by the Ministry of Public Works in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to combat unemployment among workers. The wages were very low but in La Isleta/Delicias people had no cash income. Thus a programme originally intended for areas with strong differences in seasonal labour-demand, was funnelled to Isleta/Delicias. Together with Ignacio he arranged for trucks to be sent in by the IDA, to continue the food deliveries of the World Food Programme, etc. He also paid visits to local politicians to ask for contributions. In that respect, he asserts, Ignacio was very valuable for he established

important connections with politicians from the Liberacion party. He described Ignacio as

"someone with a strong character and very intelligent. He does a lot for the community, handles a lot of information and is very skillful in the way he operates. But everything he does he combines with his personal interests. People recognize his abilities but everyone knows that he is not an altruist".³

Within the settlement, however, there was a deepening conflict between Ignacio and Adolfo. The latter was always questioning why he did not work in the fields, why was a spring sought in his plot and suggesting that he was only working for his own benefit. Moreover, the engineering capabilities of the institution were put in doubt when the spring started to empty in dry periods. Juan Manuel comments,

"In the meetings I supported Ignacio, though never publicly. Not because I liked his working style but because he knew how to fix things and had a lot of relevant information. For example, he always knew where the tractors of JAPDEVA were, which agencies could probably provide help at a given moment. It was to my advantage that he was in control of the organization. What is more important, he controls the people from higher up, from La Isleta".

His alliance with Ignacio was tactical. He did not support him in his efforts to increase his power within the community. He was well aware that Ignacio manipulated information, and people. In the beginning Ignacio would make regular comments to the effect that some of the leaders in Las Delicias were communists, but as Juan Manuel did not react he stopped doing that.

Also Juan Manuel recalled that some time ago Ignacio had offered to construct an aqueduct from another nearby village called La Perla, located midway between La Isleta and Guácimo, to Ignacio's house in Guácimo. Ignacio guaranteed that he could provide the labour from the evangelical villagers. Such a proposal, Juan Manuel argued, was rather advantageous for him, for in this way they could lay many kilometres of pipes and service various communities. He was seriously considering it, for he considered that Ignacio was a good person to work with. The only problem was, how to avoid playing his game? And he added, "For that reason I consider Ignacio a necessary evil".

8.4 Enrolment in Practice: The Case of the Preacher

In this book I attempt to develop a notion of strategy which corresponds more to the idea of agency, of the ability of social actors to take a stand vis-à-vis a conflictive problematic (such as state intervention) with a view of manipulating it, accommodating to it, or resisting it. Such a strategy might, depending on the situation, be generated by local knowledge, or it might be more or less the result of a search for new social forms. The latter, I think is the case in frontier areas such as Las Delicias and La Isleta were

³Ignacio was also known as a notorious womanizer. Many settlers suspected he was after their daughters and wives.

the force of 'tradition' appears to be less strong than in other more established places. It is in such contexts that a manipulative strategy for dealing with the state thrives.

It has been argued that a strategy for dealing with the state includes, besides practical knowledge and the development of a particular way of talking about interests, the ability to ensure the commitment of other social actors for a particular project, cause or goal. This ability I have designated enrolment. Accordingly in the remainder of the chapter I focus on how Ignacio becomes the spokesman of people in the frontier by 1. developing a way of talking about the interests of settlers and 2. developing practices of enrolling people by drawing upon and expanding a variety of social networks.

In presenting a life history of Ignacio I focus on how he mobilizes people, works on his reputation and establishes networks with a view to consciously penetrating the bureaucracy. I draw on several lengthy conversations and taped interviews I had with Ignacio in the settlements, in his church and while driving him to government offices in the Atlantic Zone and San José. Although the perspective is his, I try to place some issues within a broader context.

Ignacio's arrival in La Isleta

Ignacio arrived in the Atlantic Zone in 1980. He was in search of a farm in the neighborhood of Guápiles. For that purpose he visited a few friends, evangelicals like himself, from his home-region, Nicoya-Guanacaste, expecting that they would orient him a little. In spite of their help he did not succeed as most farms were too expensive. Consequently he decided to return to San José. In the bus station a man approached him enquiring whether he was interested in buying land. Ignacio explained that he had been looking for a farm that would not be in the lowlands as he dreaded the inundations. This man had a cheap farm on the slopes of the mountains in Tierragrande-Isleta. Ignacio stayed in Guápiles and the next day went to see the location. He liked it and bought it.

Ignacio had been working as a salesman in San José, but for reasons which are not clear to me he resigned. He was living off his savings. His 'only' responsibility at the moment he came to the Atlantic Zone was his church in Desamparados (a suburb in San José). His motive for going into farming was a very common one in Costa Rica; that of leaving to his children some property in the form of land suitable for cultivation. He was not devoid of means as his previous wife had left him a few rented houses. His idea was that he wanted to start a new life and do as his grandfather had done, who had had to struggle hard to build up a small capital.⁴

Some days later he took his wife to see the land. They walked all day to her despair. On arriving they met a young couple, Joaquín Azofeifa and his pregnant wife. It appeared that they had arrived the day before and were on their way back to buy some household implements and farming tools. Ignacio asked him then to stay a few days and help him to sow beans in return for cash. Joaquín immediately agreed. Joaquín had already converted to evangelism and would become a close friend and supporter. In those times there were only three families living in La Isleta. Most of the settlers were single men, living a simple and lonely life. Agriculture was practised for self-consumption. Besides beans and tubers, some sugar cane and maize was grown.

⁴Ignacio, however, was viewed by other people as someone with a peasant background. His dark complexion showed that he came from the impoverished region of Guanacaste. Although he was verbally very skilled and he was well-versed in the use of biblical language he made the same kind of grammatical errors typical of common peasant idiom.

Initially, however, there was little contact between the communities as there was no path connecting them. People would reach the place through the neighbouring settlement of Los Lirios.

On seeing that the area was very sparsely inhabited Ignacio made efforts to recruit some families as new "vecinos" (neighbours). Thus, he persuaded two more evangelical families from San José to move to the area. Of these two new settlers one would become, according to Ignacio, very important for the development of the community, thanks to his organizational abilities. After living 5 years in the settlement he sold his farm at a profit and left for San José to provide his children with better educational opportunities.

Ignacio recalls that on one occasion the communist union leader of Tierragrande-Macadamia, Diego Casas, visited him attempting to convince him to participate in his peasant union. He made it clear to him that he did not sympathize with that sort of movement and that his goals, as an evangelical, and as a man of peace, were different ones. From then on, he argues, there was little communication between the two sectors.

Thus, instead of working through political organizations for attracting state resources, they set up a "chain of buyers and sellers" of plots with the aim of attracting as many valuable elements for the community as possible. In this way, a policy of settler's selection was developed by which many "old" settlers sold and many new ones arrived. Consequently, only five of the original settlers out of twenty stayed. Plot owners who did not live in the settlement and who did not contribute to communal works by providing labour or money, were "advised" to sell to prospective settlers. Ignacio himself acted as an intermediary in the purchase of plots. As he asserts,

"We had a policy of selection targeting people who were not conformists but had a strong drive for development. There were on the settlement many people, some very good neighbours, but without projects, without incentives. Hence we proceeded to talk to them, discretely and as subtly as possible, in order not to offend them, to suggest to them that it was better that they sell and look for a job. That way we succeeded in persuading a lot to leave".

One of the first new owners was a doctor called Allen. As he would not qualify before the IDA, someone else was registered as the official owner. This person was very cooperative and contributed by giving a lot of money to the community. Sometimes he would participate in the meetings. Unfortunately, he was offered a job in a clinic in the U.S.A. and left. Also an agronomist from a banana plantation, who by chance came to the area to hunt, was offered a plot. This man gave the settlers a lot of agronomic recommendations about which crops to grow. For that purpose he made various soil studies. In addition a plot was sold to a lawyer who, according to Ignacio, later would become governor in Nicoya-Guanacaste, (Ignacio's place of origin). "It was always our intention to attract influential people", said Ignacio, "who could help us overcome ongoing problems in the community and set up new projects".

However, unlike Tierragrande-Macadamia (see Chapter 7), where the union followed a policy against land speculation, no tax was levied on the purchase of plots. In respect to this Ignacio argued,

"We would never do something like that. The people who left were entitled to receive the full amount a buyer was ready to pay. Some of these had been living here for years and had contributed to the construction of the road under very difficult circumstances. So, we helped them to get the highest possible price. That

was also in our interest as it demonstrated that communal projects increased the value of the plots".

Thus, Ignacio and his allies stimulated the emergence of a land market as an incentive to owners to contribute to communal projects.

The history of the communal organizations

Although Ignacio was actively involved in communal affairs he was not a leading member of the first "development committee". His continuous absence made it difficult for him to attend the meetings. The committee had been set up jointly with another sector of the Tierragrande settlement, Los Lirios. That was before Ignacio arrived. The president was a preacher from that place and its first settler. Ignacio was *fiscal* or controller of the committee. Soon, however, there were problems as the preacher from Los Lirios wanted to channel all available resources to his sector. The joint committee fell apart due to a conflict over a tractor which was made available by JAPDEVA and which was put to work in Los Lirios. From then on it was decided that La Isleta would operate autonomously.

Subsequently, a second committee was established. However, there were problems within the committee of a personal type between Ignacio, who was soon voted vice-president, and the committee's president. Ignacio, who was now living with his wife in the settlement, recalls how this man, Anastasio Gómez, "a man of low education and bad manners, who never before had worked in a committee whatsoever", started to operate in a very unpleasant way against him. Ignacio, then, decided to retreat from the committee and "let him do his job". According to Ignacio, Anastasio Gómez was not very successful because of his "bad style". He quarrelled with various functionaries and therefore the institutions closed their doors to the committee. However, I learnt that the problem with the Gómez family, had a particular background. To begin with, they were the only catholics remaining there, since many other families had been converted by the preachers (the leader of Los Lirios and Ignacio) and new evangelical families settled. Second, there was a conflict over land in which both Ignacio and Anastasio Gómez were involved. Anastasio Gómez had arrived at the settlement on a shareholding agreement with an absentee owner.

Around the same time Ignacio had arranged for the sale of a plot to a man called Sileski, a functionary of ICE, the Costa Rican Electricity Company. In view of the fact that the Gómez family had insufficient land, an arrangement was struck between Sileski, also an absentee owner, and Anastasio Gómez in which it was stipulated that Sileski would cede half of his plot in return for the clearing of the whole farm. Some time later Anastasio Gómez disavowed the agreement arguing that he had never received the promised help (in food, seed and tools). This was a rather annoying turn for Ignacio who had hoped to accelerate the establishment of electricity by having a representative of the institution in the community. In addition, Ignacio argued, that Sileski was an engineer who contributed much to the community through money and was always ready to use his influence.

Soon afterwards, this second committee was terminated, and a new one was formed with the participation of Ignacio and some of the leaders of Las Delicias. One of Ignacio's first tasks was to negotiate the supply of petrol for the motor saws needed to finish the building of a mountain pathway connecting Las Delicias with La Isleta. This path shortened the distance to the main road considerably. This proved a very hard job

which was carried out by only 10 settlers. Ignacio coordinated the project, thus laying the basis for a reputation as an able leader.⁵

Establishing a wider reputation

All this time Ignacio was busy establishing relationships within the local municipalities. In 1986 he moved to a house outside Guácimo in front of the road leading to the Tierragrande settlement. The position of that house would prove highly strategic since functionaries dealing with La Isleta would pass by his house to discuss things with him, and then decide whether it was worth while to undertake the trip. Also from there he could take all necessary bureaucratic steps. He was soon considered the representative for the various sectors of this and other settlements and villages by various functionaries.

His reputation, as representative of La Isleta and other frontier communities, was established during a conflict between the rural communities and the municipality over the right to exploit timber. The history was the following: the municipality had decided not to extend more permits for transporting timber from the settlements to the sawmills. This permit is extended on condition that the earnings will be spent on communal projects (roads). In addition, the forestry service of the Ministry of Agriculture undertakes a study before extending a second permit for exploiting timber on a plot. (This is done in order to avoid the deforestation of river-beds and slopes).

By this drastic measure the municipalities were trying to stop the alarming pace of deforestation in that area. So the communities were informed. This caused much alarm among settlers as timber is the first commodity they can exploit while clearing their land for agriculture. In addition timber exploitation provides the community with an important resource for road-building. The communities saw this measure as a very arbitrary one which, in their view, amounted to a check on their development. Moreover, they reacted with indignation to the prospect of watching the timber from clearing their land rot on their plots.

Ignacio played an important role in this conflict by presenting himself as the spokesman of the communities. At a meeting, with massive participation by settlers, which took place in the municipality, he voiced the communities' concerns and argued, with much verbal skill, that since the permits had already been signed it was illegal not to confirm them. Thereafter a delegation, headed by Ignacio, went to the office of the Ministry of Agriculture in Siquirres. And, after consulting with the central offices the decision was taken to revoke the measure. This was considered an important success for the communities, since it created a precedent for them. According to Ignacio, since then, he had been considered by the municipalities as the legitimate representative for that area. Henceforth, among other things, he was put in control of the distribution of food by the World Food Programme.

Establishing networks within institutions

His experiences with state agencies and ministries was rather different. In fact, when he bought the plot he did not know that it was located on an IDA settlement. At the time he only vaguely knew about its existence. This changed, however, as establishing a relationship with this institution proved crucial, not only for acquiring a legal title but

⁵The president of the former committee, Anastasio Gómez, argues that he and his sons provided most labour and that his motor saw was damaged. He became very frustrated when noticing that Ignacio got all the honours, while nobody showed any interest in paying for the repair of the motor saw. After that he retreated from any form of communal cooperation.

also for gaining access to a number of state services (bank credit on easy terms). He set about doing this while he was still living in San José. One important contact he made was the Head of the Department of Titling, Alfredo Villegas (who came from the same area in Guanacaste). He dealt with problems relating to the issue of titles in the community directly with him. He claims they established a personal friendship.

Ignacio approached the IDA by presenting himself as an evangelical, a Christian, "a man of God, of peace and mindful of the truth". As he states,

"When there is a problem I insist on talking to the people who can help me. To that effect I investigate who takes the decisions. Sometimes, when I come into a waiting room I am referred to a subordinate. In that case I tell the secretary no, I came to talk seriously, I need solutions, I need more than to be listened to, for I represent an entire community. If the secretary says that the Chief is not available I ask her when he will be and if that is not today I tell her that I will return as many times as necessary to meet him. In this way I always succeed in obtaining an appointment.

He used not to deal with IDA's Regional Office, which previously was located in Bataan, because of their "negligence". He would go directly to the headquarters in San José. Little by little he started opening doors. But, the most important encounter he had was the first one, with the previous Executive President, Don Antonio Salgado. He recalls that when he went to his office the secretary told him that he could only talk with the President after officially applying for an audience. Ignacio replied that he did not mind waiting and that he had family in San José he could stay with if necessary. If needed he could wait until closing hours. As the secretary observed that don Antonio had no fixed programme Ignacio answered that he would wait until he came out of his room. However, as he suspected that Don Antonio could leave through a back door he inquired which car was his and waited for him there. Ignacio describes his conversation with the Executive President of the IDA as follows,

"I needed to talk to him about the road. They had machines and tractors, often idle or in need of repair because of bad maintenance, but we needed these, because we had to produce to live. Later, before closing time someone approached the car. He asked me who I was. I answered that I was the person needing to talk to Don Antonio Salgado. He said, I am Antonio Salgado. I told him that I had to talk to him, no matter where, there on the sidewalk or in his office, wherever he preferred. Then he invited me to enter his office. There I explained to him the problem, that we were building a road, the first one, and that we needed a tractor and petrol. We would provide the labour and take charge of other costs. So, if he could give us the tractor we would finish that road. He consulted the head of road construction who informed him that there was no tractor available in the Atlantic zone. Thus he offered to supply the diesel. He said, my friend I cannot provide a tractor but be confident that you will get as much petrol as you need. Before leaving I asked Don Antonio Salgado for a signed declaration that he committed himself to provide the petrol before a specific date. That way, I explained to him, it would become easier to arrange a tractor from JAPDEVA.

After much pressure they got a tractor from JAPDEVA. Also they received additional petrol from the IDA, from the MOPT and from JAPDEVA. Thus they had a large surplus of petrol.

"I thought that we had to be responsible in the use of resources and I went to the IDA and spoke to the Head of the Infrastructural Department, Misael Barva. I told him that since we did not need all the petrol we would return it, so that another community could make use of it. He was amazed and said to me that it was the first time this had happened to him. Usually every settlement was demanding and demanding without ever seeking cooperation with others. Afterwards I had a very good relationship with this man, who by the way also comes from Guanacaste.

From that moment onwards, he says, he received much support from the central departments of the IDA. When possible they would lend a truck for transporting sand, etc. His relationship with Don Antonio Salgado proved to be decisive for the construction of the road. Once Ignacio met him in the institution and Don Antonio Salgado told him that soon a few functionaries of the World Bank would come to discuss the establishment of projects in the Atlantic zone. He said to Ignacio that they might be able to do something for his settlement. Ignacio immediately showed interest and it was agreed that these functionaries would visit La Isleta in their trip to the Atlantic zone. But, they did not reach La Isleta as the road was too bad. Then, according to Ignacio they promised to help with specially adapted technology and with the road. So far, they had been given no notice about the former but the construction of the road had been budgetted for.

However, they did not wait until the money was released before again working on the road. They got a tractor from JAPDEVA again, three times one from the MPT (the Ministry of Public Works), and once one from the CNP (the marketing board). Ignacio claims that he himself arranged the necessary construction plans, for which he got help from the engineer in the settlement. In addition he arranged for the documents required by the municipality. He was congratulated by JAPDEVA for the neat way it had been done.

Previous experiences with community struggles

Ignacio was able to build upon his prior experience with local authorities. He already had some experience in community work in San José since 1974. In the locality where he lived, Desamparados, there were many streets without sewers or gutters. He worked outside the existing local organizations. That led to a conflict between his church group and the local Development Association whose president complained that the Municipality was providing his group more material than their Association. Ignacio's answer was that the reason why they had taken over was that the Association had not been able to put the people to work. Finally, a decision was taken to set up joint working groups on Sundays for laying the gutters. Although the conflict continued they were, according to him, successful in most of their goals, like asphaltting the road.

Also, in 1978 he bought a few properties in San José, one of them on the border of the city where there was no street, nor sewers. In fact he was not able to buy it legally. Ignacio took a risk and again began to fight with the municipality. He did so by advocating the demands and needs of other *vecinos* (neighbours). With the help of a lawyer he had his, and other squatter's plots, measured and registered in the Land Registry Office. Later, in the Atlantic zone, in Guácimo, he would follow the same strategy.

So far we see that an important tactic in Ignacio's operation style consists of taking advantage of divisions in communal organizations and institutions to negotiate new arrangements which are favourable to the group of people he, at the moment, happens to represent. Ignacio, in fact, works with people who are not incorporated into the corporatist administrative system, and is very skilled in voicing their needs: in

developing a language for talking about their interests. At the same time he sets out to cultivate a wide social network within institutions, local political arenas, etc. His greatest asset is his capacity to put people - whether settlers or bureaucrats - to work, to enrol them within his projects. As I argue next, this is his basis of power.

Networks and Ignacio's social bases of power

When talking of evangelical churches in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica we should differentiate between the churches established by the black population forming part of the Jamaican religious tradition, and the recent, revivalist and charismatic sects. One could argue that many members of these sects belong to the poorer and less influential sectors of the community. They also include secretaries, teachers and low-level bureaucrats. Yet, I never met political characters or middle-level functionaries, or staff employees of banana companies, belonging to these churches. One impression I had of people belonging to Ignacio's new church in Pocora (on the lowlands) was its egalitarianism and the modesty of its members. The church itself was in the process of being built, the labour provided by church members. It was not much more than a row of benches in front of a table under a thatched roof.

One common theme in the conversation between evangelicals, and in the preaching of Ignacio, was the struggle against the "vices of the devil". These were among others drinking, smoking and sex outside marriage. Ignacio told me various stories about people who got into trouble because of alcoholism and converted to the church. Although these people would often take up again liquor for periods, the church provided the much needed support and social control to overcome the vice.

Also, within these church groups knowledge about each others' personal problems, social conditions, skills and economic opportunities circulates. Furthermore, through the church close bonds are created between people, of an emotional and supportive type, leading to the formation of a moral community. This moral community, although egalitarian in ideology and outlook is rather diversified in terms of social and occupational background (which can vary a lot in a colonization area), property (land, houses), sex, organizational experience, etc. Furthermore, the church displays an internal service hierarchy depending on length of membership and degree of commitment. In this way socio-emotional involvement in the church and respect for its rules are rewarded by a considerable degree of prestige and a good reputation.

Though I did not investigate the subject I heard of many cases of cooperative behaviour and special trust relationships. And whatever else, the church provides people with organizational resources based on the potentiality to mobilize people, influence, and material resources; thus supplying the 'raw material' for the constitution of social networks.

Ignacio would play an important role as an intermediary in the enactment of such a church-based social network. He passed on information about members who wanted to sell or purchase land, about available jobs and of people in need of money. If asked, he would give his opinion about the reputation of a particular member or would pass information about the readiness of a widow to lend money, etc. Such functions of intermediation not only occurred within the local range but also involved members of other churches affiliated all over the zone.

In fact, as we have seen, Ignacio was highly skilled in utilizing social networks; the recruitment policy in the settlements being the most obvious one. Also on our trips Ignacio would point out to me many people, members of his church who were active as small cattle traders, traders in land. Sometimes he would tell me about the quick transactions he made buying and selling (often timber), while making a rapid profit.

Within the church community in the Atlantic zone Ignacio was considered as someone who had skills in dealing with food and water programmes. His reputation as a defender of communal rights helped him to get a position as preacher in Pocora, the latest village he has moved to. Again, he did not move to the centre but to the border of the village where houses do not have water and electricity, where he established his church. Indeed, one of his first initiatives, there, was a programme for the construction of an aqueduct in the outskirts of Pocora.

8.5 Conclusion

In reflecting upon Ignacio and the social worker, Juan Manuel, it strikes us that they have something in common, Ignacio by dealing with state institutions, and Juan Manuel with peasant communities have developed a large body of relevant knowledge that helps them to lay out a style of operation, helping them to sort out concrete, everyday problems that hinder the progress of a project. By becoming committed to the aqueduct they developed a pragmatic understanding, or practical knowledge, of what the interests of the "community", of the "institution", and of themselves were. In the case of Ignacio, thanks to this project, his reputation as the representative of the poor was established, and he developed a very rare type of expertise regarding aqueduct projects. In addition we see that he skilfully made use of his previous experiences in dealing with state institutions and his position as a preacher to strengthen his position within the community. Juan Manuel accepted this project as a challenge in an effort to develop ways to combine his tasks with the provision of a crucial service to distant, resourceless communities. The moment that he is accused of identifying too much with the "peasants", he reacts by arguing that like technical knowledge, social knowledge is only applicable when a good understanding is attained of local conditions. In the process Ignacio and Juan Manuel strike a tactical alliance to gain access to the resources needed to finish the project.

They were quite successful in that respect. Thanks to the help of Juan Manuel and by deploying an anti-communist discourse of 'citizenship', and suggesting that he controls a large population of poor, but peaceful people (and votes), Ignacio gains access to scarce institutional resources. However, the capacity to use those resources required him to coordinate their use, in the right combinations at the right moment. Yet, he was only able to draw directly upon a relatively small number of settlers (13 out of 30-40). Accordingly, he had to convince his rivals, and other settlers who were suspicious of him, that only by following his style of operation was it possible to terminate the project.

On the other hand, Juan Manuel used various means (threats of stopping the project, the letter), to induce the settlers to continue the work at a juncture in which most participants were doubting the sense of it, while putting at risk his own reputation within the institution.

Success, however, had not the same meaning for all the actors. It is clear that all the participants saw the project as their accomplishment and were proud of it. However, the old leftist leaders, despite their commitment, lost part of their reputation as Ignacio was able to monopolize the relations with outside agencies. Ignacio was successful in projecting himself at the inauguration as the "brain" behind the project. Yet, although people respected him he never became an undisputed leader in

Isleta/Delicias. He chose to move to a larger place, Pocora, where he could pursue his involvement in local organisations with his activities as a preacher.

The old leaders, and with them a majority of the participants, had mixed feelings concerning Juan Manuel. They never saw him as someone committed to the community and resented his close relationship to Ignacio. Doubts persisted about the choice of the spring in Ignacio's plot, and of its water-bearing capacity. Even nowadays, there are still plans to divide the project. However, as Baltázar, one of the leftist communal leaders once commented,

"Progress is not like a party, what counts is not whether we quarrel and call names to each other; what counts is what we can leave to our children. We have learnt a lot from this project. It has shown us that through cooperation we can do everything. It is a common accomplishment and for that reason I am opposed to its division".

In the discussion I argued that in order to gain a fuller understanding of how intervention is appropriated by settlers it is necessary to examine how social actors develop ways for talking about local interests, as well as how they use practical knowledge as to the functioning of the bureaucracy, while developing their capacity to enrol a diversity of social actors.

The chapter has shown that this capacity to enrol people is not merely based on persuasion, or on the use of a particular discourse. It entails participating in and expanding social networks within differing socio-institutional settings. Thus, we see that Ignacio finds ways to mobilize settlers in La Isleta, he is also able to establish strong personal relationships with officials in a variety of institutions. At the same time his enrolment skills are strongly related to his ability to coordinate the use of resources, an ability which requires a practical knowledge about how state agencies allocate resources.

Such an approach to studying how farmers deal with the state, I think, sheds light on the heterogeneity of the frontier. Thus, given the differential access to resources, given the existence of different world-views and given the prevalence of an authority structure whose basic legitimacy is seldom contested (the state), people in frontier settlements develop a diversity of ways for dealing with the state. Such strategies of intervention-coping include among others accommodation to evolving forms of state intervention or, conversely, active resistance. In this chapter I attempted to show that, depending on the dynamics of the local situation, other ways of establishing a connection with the state are possible. Thus manipulation as a strategy was described as a way of representing the interests of 'poor', 'marginalized' people in the frontier, and practical knowledge about gaining access to and coordinating the use of resources, with a view to creating a situation in which a project can be pursued only by following one, and only one particular path. As we saw Ignacio became quite skilled in the art of enrolling people.

CHAPTER 9

SOME NOTES FOR A SOCIOLOGY OF INTERVENTION

9.1 Introduction

In the course of this work an effort has been made to develop a practice-oriented methodology for studying state-peasant relations - as manifested in encounters between peasants and the bureaucracy - which takes account of both the contradictory effects of state intervention and the socially constructed character of farmers' strategies for dealing with state agencies. In the first part of the book the genealogy and effects of a particular ideology of intervention was investigated, by focusing on rival institutional projects, on the deployment of a model of the client and on how front-line workers develop styles of operation. In the second part of the book the idea that farmers develop strategies for coping with intervention was developed by focusing on a diversity of social practices farmers engage in when dealing with state activity. In doing so intervention and intervention-coping were treated as the outcome of social practices and strategies actors develop when involved in a series of struggles and negotiations.

One question that remains, though, is how can a detailed analysis of practices of intervention and intervention-coping help us to develop theoretical insights relating to wider debates on 'development' thinking. This is a highly theoretical theme upon which I touch only schematically, for the reason that 'development thinking' is underpinned by a number of, often implicit, assumptions concerning the 'role of the state' and the nature and significance of 'development' in relation to 'modernity.'¹ It would go beyond the scope of this book to discuss these assumptions, but the following comments are in place. It would not be a gross exaggeration to divide development thinking into two main bodies of literature. First, a positivist, modernization, tradition which aspires to theoretical generalization and prediction, and which prevails in the planning and policy literature. Second, a critical, neo-marxist and political economy tradition which sets out to analyse development processes in terms of the conflicting social interests of collective actors (classes), or, in a more structural vein, in terms of structural contradictions arising within a (dominant) mode of production. It must be noted that in spite of the differences in epistemology (empiricist or not) and theoretical objectives both traditions rely upon a conception of the state implying that states

¹There is a fledgling discussion on this theme between those who believe that the project of modernity has not yet been completed (Giddens 1990; Habermas 1987) and those, like Lyotard (1984), who celebrate the post-modern condition (see for an interesting review of the whole debate Dews 1990).

represent the general interests of society or the particular ones of a collectivity, class, system or 'mode'; in short, that they play a principal role in the reproduction of a social system. Similarly, both traditions in development thinking hold to a realist conception of social process, as manifesting a logic of its own, and accordingly determining, constraining or shaping the actions of people. Development as a social process, then, is viewed as having a reality of its own, with a telos, or implicit objective. One result of such a realist conception of social process as applied to the study of the state is that a clear demarcation is made between the state and civil society, to the detriment of the study of localized relationships between sets of actors holding to different social and institutional projects (Migdal, 1988; see Skocpol, 1985, for a research agenda based on a state-centred perspective; and Arce, Villareal and de Vries, forthcoming, for a critique of state-centred approaches).

The analysis in this book has eschewed sociological realism in respect to notions of the state and social process. The view of the state adopted has been a Foucauldian one (1971), inasmuch it is not conceived of as an entity with a comprehensive or unified rationality.² Instead I have focussed on patterns of authority as manifested in manager's institutional projects, in localized practices of social control, in rationalities and ideologies of institutional functioning and attendant ways of conceiving of the targets of state activity (as beneficiaries, clients), as implied in the concept of institution-client relations. Accordingly, the analysis has not been focussed on what the state does to peasants and vice-versa, but on how particular conceptions of institutional-client, or state-peasant, relations are constructed, appropriated and transformed by a variety of social actors. The aim was that of analysing how modes of action, practices of social control and strategies for dealing with intervention emerge; not as the outcome of a logic of state action, but as the result of a set of struggles between a number of actors wielding different forms of power.

In the remainder of this chapter the various theoretical and ethnographic arguments are pulled together. First, the ethnographic argument will be summarized. Second, I lay out the rationale for not choosing other theoretical approaches which at first sight might have seemed relevant to a study of state-peasant relations. Third, a few theoretical issues central to a sociology of intervention and intervention-appropriation are further elaborated. Four, I compare my approach with others which also draw upon post-structuralist thinking.

9.2 Summarizing the Argument

The 034 programme I focussed on aimed to introduce modern and efficient modes of coordination and decision making procedures. The USAID planners held the view that in order to break the prevailing institutional (political) culture it was necessary to introduce a modern kind of non-political type of institution-beneficiary relationship. The current practice up to then was that each department in the capital city would send its personnel to the field. In view of the large autonomy of the departments and sections and the political rationale of so many activities this led to clientelistic relationships between political entrepreneurs in the institution and groups of beneficiaries in

²Foucault's work on governmentality has given rise to interesting research on state intervention in the area of economics, law, health, etc. See the book edited by Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991) which has been aptly named the Foucault effect.

settlements all over the country. As a result a multiplicity of fissiparous tendencies prevailed within the IDA and conflicting (political) loyalties endured. In short, politics permeated all institutional activity.

Drawing upon a particular model of the client which was introduced by the USAID planners which conceived of the beneficiary as a client who has to be provided with a comprehensive package of services in order to become an entrepreneurial farmer, Don Roberto, the Project Implementation Manager of the IDA, set out to establish an institutional project geared to carrying through a strict separation between policy, including political management, and implementation. According to this institutional project implementation should be organized at the regional level, and the regional directors should be the pivotal figures coordinating the activities of the central departments. Hence, Don Roberto Arcos argued that through regional decentralization more control over the settlement area and a better grip on the colonization problematic would be attained. In his view only by creating strong and responsible regional offices was it possible to foster the sort of institutional discipline with regard to the management of resources that could stop the prevailing practice of politicians using the institution as an electoral instrument and a *vaca lechera* (a cow to milk).

Don Roberto's institutional project was confronted with a series of vested interests which were opposed to his scheme of regional decentralization. The result was that he became engaged in a longlasting struggle with a broad coalition of department heads and bureaucrats with political ambitions. This struggle was underpinned by the enduring persistence of two other institutional projects, each with a distinct conception of the role of the IDA within the existing Costa Rican institutional system, a conception of the interrelation between the problem of landlessness and national 'development, and a particular view of the farmer as a beneficiary. In short, the IDA's functioning was analysed in terms of competition within the following institutional projects: an anti-interventionist, a populist/incorporationist and a transformationalist one. It was also argued, drawing upon the work of Shifter (1983, 1986), that these conflicting projects drew upon differing interpretations of the historical project of *Liberación Nacional*, the political party which lies at the cradle of most institutions in Costa Rica.

The conclusion of Chapter 2 was that a focus on institutional projects provided an alternative way for understanding the functioning of the IDA, but threw little light on the actual dynamics of intervention. This was apparent in the incongruity between the world of policy and management and the world of the local bureaucracy. And it was argued that it was at the level of implementation that intervention practices and ideologies were fashioned. Examining the latter entailed studying the knowledge interfaces between the local bureaucracy and IDA beneficiaries.

Focusing on implementation interfaces

As argued throughout this book there was a hidden agenda behind the O34 programme, which can also be viewed as an attempt in the late 1970s to control a situation in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica which was perceived by the state and USAID as explosive. In Chapter 3, I discussed the administrative process in, and around, the regional office of Neguev. It was shown that the contingent and fragmented nature of the local administration provided the context in which settlers were labelled and processed as "cases" by the officials. In this chapter a particular, bureaucratic, way of talking about settlers was examined which was imbued with stereotyped images of them as 'lazy', 'conservative' and in need of education. In the administrative domain, settlers were treated in a uniform way and in accordance with common bureaucratic procedures,

while little interest was paid to their particular situations. In addition, social interaction between front-line workers was characterized by little effective solidarity and the prevalence of 'petty' issues such as complaints over allowances, gossip, etc., in their thinking, while conformity to what I called a given ideology of intervention, encompassing a set of beliefs concerning the 'nature of the farmer' and labelling and legitimization practices, seemed to be the rule. One thing was sure, a 'taboo' prevailed on addressing major issues which had to do with the problems and contradictions of state intervention. It was also argued that the ideology of intervention was shaped through the local appropriation and transformation of the model of the client developed by USAID planners into a model of the 'undeserving client'.

However, limiting the research to the administrative domain would have led to an analysis in terms of labelling practices and the alienated attitude of front-line workers as suggested by Lipsky (1980). When I started accompanying field workers to the field I encountered a very different reality from that of the administrative setting: that of very personalized relationships between the officials and the settlers taking place in the informal context of the latter's farms. Thus chapter 4 discussed what I designated the client-official interface in which I encountered a reality which was rather different from that of the settlement office. In the field, in contrast to the administrative domain, the front-line workers were subjected to the unrelenting criticisms of clients, while at the same time having to ensure the settlers' compliance with programme requirements. By focusing on the client-official interface in the field domain it was possible to view how front-line workers were exposed to two different kinds of pressures: those of accommodative settlers who employed an idiom of clientelism, and those of radical settlers who doubted their honesty and capabilities. The result was that front-line workers were often forced to negotiate their legitimacy as state bureaucrats, while being confronted with the contradictions and limitations of state intervention. This occurred when they were involved in local problems which were related to wider policy and political issues. It must be said that some front-line workers were more committed than others to the fate of their clients, and this was reflected in their differing operational styles. Some front-line workers, such as the *agraristas*, were ready to internalize the ideology of intervention in such a way that they became the life-embodiment of the state. This, it was argued, was not a logical concomitant of the ideology of state intervention but the result of a process of accommodation by such front-line workers. On the other hand, the contingencies of dealing with "unruly peasants" offered other front-line workers, such as Mario Green (the social worker) and the *técnico* Samuel Lozano a high degree of discretion which they could employ for developing ways of dealing with settlers which were in accordance with the broader set of pressures and commitments that impinged upon their bureaucratic functioning.

It appeared, then, that administrative labelling practices were not capable of obscuring the political nature of implementation. Thus we saw in Chapter 4 that front-line workers were impelled to draw upon modes of legitimization when dealing with farmers in the personalized context of the farmer's farms. The irony of the whole story is that the attempt to restructure institution-client relations along non-clientelistic lines led to the resurgence of a new mode of dependency by settlers on functionaries. Thus the previous form of political clientelism gave way to bureaucratic clientelism. Neither was the relationship between the IDA and the settlers depoliticized. Instead a new kind of politics, one which revolved around the power of intervention emerged.

Appropriating state intervention

As suggested, massive state intervention in Neguev was not successful in imposing a standardized mode of institution-client relations. In Neguev as in Tierragrande, the other settlement where I did research and which experienced a less massive form of intervention, it was possible to distinguish several opposing factions among the settler population. There were settlers who, for differing reasons, were ready to accommodate to IDA intervention, radicals who were highly suspicious of the depoliticizing goals of state intervention, and individuals who were highly skilled in taking advantage of conflicts at the interface of community and bureaucracy. It was argued that peasant strategies for dealing with state intervention can exhibit a variety of forms which range from 'opportunistic' forms of accommodation (gatekeeping), to endeavours to create tactical distance from the IDA (autonomy-enhancement), to open resistance and manipulation.

In Chapter 6 the Association of Small Producers of Neguev was described and it was concluded that in spite of the support and commitment of IDA through one *tecnico*, Samuel Lozano, it was not able to build a broad basis among the settler population and thus become a representative organisation. One principal reason for this was that it was torn apart by two rival conceptions of how to deal with state intervention. Thus there were those loyalists, some of whom became the gatekeepers, who developed ways of maintaining their preferential access to state personnel, while holding to key functions in the farmer's association. Then there were more independent settlers who attempted to reshape the farmer's association as a more independent tool for negotiation with the state over credit conditions, etc.

In applying the concept of intervention-coping in its threefold disaggregation (talk of interests, practical knowledge and enrolment practices) it was concluded that autonomy-enhancement as a strategy was not successful in the Milano sector due to the reluctance of the new president, Miguel Huerta, to draw upon the discourse of community in his struggles for reshaping the Association. Such a discourse of community, so far, had been shaped by radical *Upagrista* settlers in their struggle against the authoritarian and marginalizing effects of the 034 programme. Hence, talking about community issues was associated with attempts to politicize the relationship with IDA.

Miguel Huerta was not able to convince the new beneficiaries of the new agricultural development programmes of the centrality of the Association, due to his unwillingness to address, within the context of the Association, a number of basic organisational questions which had to do with the lack of local organisation for maintaining and improving the existing community infrastructure. Due to a lack of commitment by the other members of the Association's board a number of pressing issues concerning the distribution of titles, the reparation of bridges, etc. were not tackled, hence giving the opportunity to radical settlers to question the effectiveness of the Association as a representative of all producers. In short, the strategy of autonomy-enhancement was not successful in Milano due to the failure to develop a *meaningful* language of interests which could justify the necessity of establishing a more independent relationship with a variety of state agencies (thus not only IDA) in line with the new agricultural policy of *agricultura de cambio*. This entailed developing the capacity to enrol potential beneficiaries in the Association who had a different (often conflictive) history with the IDA. This in turn implied that a space for public debate be opened in which state policy could become the subject of criticisms by unsatisfied members. Such a politicization of the Association was unacceptable to Miguel Huerta. Unsuccessful enrolment, then, was predicated on the political dangers for basically

accommodative farmers of establishing a link between the discourse of community and that of agricultural modernization.

Chapters 7 and 8 contained two case studies taking place in different sectors of the neighbouring Tierragrande settlement. In Chapter 7 'resistance' as a strategy for dealing with intervention was studied by focusing on how the Neguev officials set off, under the resolute leadership of the regional manager, to 'conquer the frontier' from the communists. They confronted a peasant leader, Diego Casas, who had strong connections with a leftist peasant union, the FENAC. As the news spread around of a large regional development programme, a few former partners of the communist peasant leader struck an alliance with the regional office with the purpose of influencing the future implementation of the programme in the settlement (especially in regard to the design of the road and the distribution of land ownership titles). However, in spite of all the promises made, IDA was not able to enforce a new mode of local organisation which had the support of the whole settlement. Diego Casas, skillfully exploiting IDA's administrators' contradictions in their discourse of democracy/citizenship, left the responsibility of local organisation to the rival development committee and, after predicting (rightly) that without the involvement of his own committee local organisation would collapse, he was able to regain the initiative.³ In this chapter it was possible to view how discursive practices of 'democracy' and 'community' are deployed in local negotiations.

In chapter 8 practices of enrolment were the focal point of analysis. The chapter, therefore, did not focus so much on discourse but on how enrolment is accomplished by a charismatic preacher, Ignacio, in competition with other community leaders. The case study discussed a water provision project in which Ignacio played a central role. In drawing upon upon the idioms of anti-communism, peaceful evangelism and progress he was able to attract state resources to the settlement community, while furthering his own entrepreneurial aspirations. Furthermore, by establishing a tactical alliance with Juan Manuel, the social worker of the rural aqueduct agency, he was able to gain control of the aqueduct project, and by drawing upon a complex social network - one he had been working on since his arrival in the Atlantic zone - he was able to play a pivotal role in the project. Indeed, Ignacio developed a rare knowledge about the workings of the 'development' bureaucracy and the predicament of poor settlers in the frontier. He became specialized in fostering local projects while combining his own personal interests and that of particular - not all - sectors of the community and the state bureaucracy. In this way a manipulative strategy of intervention-coping was constructed based on the ability to accomplish numerous practical tasks while closing off alternative courses of action.

³Yet, it must be noted that these were not the only practices for dealing with the state in the Neguev and Tierragrande settlements. There were also individuals who developed highly effective ways for penetrating the bureaucracy by meddling in political conflicts within the administration and establishing conjunctural alliances with different factions at different points in time for personal purposes. Finally, there was a large group of evangelicals who, to different degrees, were able to secure a level of autonomy by drawing upon their own social networks for exploring alternative modes of access to important resources such as credit, land, etc. Furthermore, by keeping aside from the conflictive arenas over state intervention without questioning the legitimacy of the state they were able to diminish their vulnerability to worldly powers. These practices for dealing with the state have not been discussed in the thesis for lack of space.

9.3 Alternative Approaches to State-Peasant Relations

It is possible to single out four distinctive analytical perspectives on state-peasant relations which are pertinent for the case of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica: the moral economy, the articulation of modes of production, the commoditization approach and the Weberian institutionalization approach. In these approaches the role of the state in the reproduction of peasant smallholder production, its destruction, or its subsumption to a capitalist mode of production stand central. Underlying each approach are a set of assumptions regarding 1) the definition of a petty commodity form of production, a peasant way of life, or a peasant rationality in terms of a set of institutional arrangements which are presumed to be central to its reproduction (such as the peasant household, and a diversity of social forms regulating the distribution and exchange of land, labour, produce, monetary and other resources), and 2) assumptions regarding the role of 'peasant' forms of production in the process of capitalist accumulation.

It is not my intention here to go into a detailed analysis of these approaches and their underlying assumptions. Instead I lay out how the research strategies suggested by these perspectives differed from the approach I chose.

The *moral economy perspective* (James Scott 1976, on moral patron-client ties within a moral economy contexts, Wolf 1957 on closed corporate communities, see also Roseberry 1989 and Mitchell 1990 for two recent critiques of the moral economy thesis) seemed at the beginning of the research relevant, especially when studying clientelistic relationships between state officials and settlers/beneficiaries in which a moral discourse of rights and obligations played an important role. As argued in Chapter 1, holding to such a perspective would have suggested that bureaucrats and beneficiaries shared the same cultural framework. However, although the backgrounds and life style of most front-line workers did not differ markedly from those of the farmers, it appeared that social interaction within the administrative process was underwritten by a distinct ideology of intervention. As argued in Chapter 3 and 4, this ideology served to sustain a sharp distinction between administrative life and the reality of peasant life, by generating particular views on agricultural 'development' coupled with a model of the client.

The *articulation of modes of production* approach (Meillasoux 1972, Taylor, 1979, Deere and de Janvry 1979; Foweraker 1981) has shown that so-called peasants in various parts of the world have of old been involved in capitalist forms (mining, plantation agriculture) and it therefore posits that the peasant economy cannot be understood without taking into consideration its "articulation" with capitalist modes. In the context of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica this approach reminded me of theoretical questions concerning the interlocking dynamics of the plantation and the settlement sectors, thereby suggesting a particular conceptualization of the role of the state in the reproduction of this dynamic. However, I was interested in analysing practices of intervention and intervention-coping and in documenting how farmers and bureaucrats accord meaning to state intervention so as to construct strategies for accomodating to, resisting or manipulating state intervention, rather than studying abstract processes of capitalist penetration and their interrelationship with specific types of peasant struggle and ideology.

The *commoditization approach* (Bernstein 1979, 1986; Friedmann 1980; Goodman and Redclift 1985; Long 1986; Mac Ewen Scott 1986) has made an important contribution to the conceptualization of the reproduction of small-scale

farms/enterprises by inquiring into the determination of a form of production by the interplay of the social forms in which production is organised (intra- and inter-household cooperation) and the wider dynamics of the regional, national and global economy. In this way differing types of social differentiation can be studied empirically.

Yet, in doing so, this approach pays little attention to actors' strategies and discourse and thereby a view arises of 'commoditization' as a relentless process in which the agency of abstract forces is given theoretical primacy. This, in conjunction with the tendency to reduce the significance of socio-cultural and political activity to their function in these wider processes, impedes a good understanding of organizational forms in terms of social practice.⁴

Lastly, the Weberian institutionalization approach (Benvenuti and Mommaas 1985; van der Ploeg 1985) analyzes peasant involvement in modern or capitalist forms of economic and political activity as the result of their incorporation within wider legal, institutional and technological structures. Though differing in their analysis of the precise mechanisms and consequences of such processes, the *Weberian rationalization* approach accords major causal significance to forms of administrative centralization and technological standardization (see Benvenuti 1975).⁵ Such approaches, although according more importance to state-initiated processes than to the role of social classes, are similar to the political economy perspective, inasmuch as they accord explanatory primacy to external factors impinging upon farmers' lives.

My assessment of the usefulness of these theories can be summarized as follows. When viewed from a distance it seems plausible that conflictive state-peasant relations originate in some generalized disaffection, disrupting a local balance of rights and obligations as implied in the *moral economy* approach. Yet when one studies rural conflict in more detail, one tends to reject such a Durkheimian view, and the understanding of the contradictory interests of the various social categories seems to be crucial. One then starts inquiring into the underlying 'structural' reasons for such contradictions. Structural approaches such as *commoditization* and *the articulation of modes of production* appear valid. Yet, when one studies conflict 'on the ground' it appears that an analysis in terms of structural contradiction is not capable of throwing light on the diverging commitments and modes of action which peasants display in a diversity of local struggles. It appears that farmers' social interests cannot be logically derived from some theory of peasant economy or collective action. It therefore seems more pertinent to focus on how (groups of) farmers, themselves, discursively formulate

⁴Gavin Smith (1990), as an exception, attempts to introduce issues of cultural construction and consciousness when analysing state-peasant relations from a commoditization perspective. He thereby focusses on the interplay between local struggles over access to land and larger processes of capitalist expansion. However, the analysis seems to me not wholly convincing inasmuch as a dichotomous image is put forward of local actors struggling against the abstract agency of a capitalist system. In addition, such an approach entails seeing state action as an epiphenomenon of capitalism. This, in my view, obscures the dynamics of situated forms of state-peasant relations. In contrast, I argue that it is important to develop a set of concepts enabling us to make sense of the social practices by which state officials attempt to exert social control over farmers, and the various strategies peasants deploy in resisting or appropriating state intervention.

⁵See van der Ploeg (1986; 1989) for a less deterministic analysis which shares the same theoretical preoccupations. Benvenuti (1985) has since changed his overly pessimistic views. The point I want to make, however, is that there is a great difference between a perspective which focusses on some process of rationalization and one which inquires into how local actors adopt, transform and appropriate rationality models and discourses which serve to sustain hegemonic relationships, by engaging in local struggles.

their interests within the context of local struggles.⁶ This, in fact, is a different research strategy from that of explaining rural conflict as an expression of the underlying structural contradictions of an agrarian structure.

A practice-oriented approach (Bourdieu 1977) which centres on how farmers strategically engage in practices of negotiation and accommodation with bureaucrats appears then to offer a fruitful alternative to structuralist approaches. Such an approach helps us to criticize managerialist intervention models by showing that no objective and predictive knowledge about 'local processes' can be developed, for the reason that practices of negotiation and accommodation play a decisive, if not 'disorganising', role in the way in which planned intervention works out. Thus, one major argument in this book is that development intervention encompasses a variety of practices and strategies which are not reducible to the schematas and assumptions contained in interventionist planning models. Instead, a practice-oriented approach to state intervention entails studying how the resources and meanings of intervention are appropriated by its targets, eventually leading to the emergence of strategies of intervention-coping.

But, what are the implications of such an approach for an understanding of peasant political activity?

State-peasant relations and diversity

It is my argument that taking a discourse-centred constructivist approach has distinct implications for our understanding of collective action as exemplified in peasant movements. Throughout the book I refer to state-peasant relations in the plural and not as a single, *sui generis* phenomenon separated from other areas of the actors' social life. It is not that I deny that peasant movements might, at certain points in time, acquire a dynamics of their own, and that they may play an important role in shaping the identities of peasant farmers in whole regions. But, I do contend that in order to avoid reifying the concept of peasant movements we have to focus on the myriad of diffuse and often contradictory practices by which farmers negotiate the authority of the state.

Thus it is argued that peasant movements and related forms of more or less organised collective action are ultimately based upon a diversity of localized types of state-peasant relations. That makes peasant political activity so rich, but also so equivocal. The problem of peasant organisations in areas such as the Atlantic Zone of Costa Rica, then, is not that peasants are difficult to mobilize due to a lack of 'class consciousness', but that they themselves display too many initiatives. In effect, it can be argued that the multiplicity of peasant strategic activity presents major problems to peasant organisations fostering organised forms of collective action. This, in fact, is the predicament of organisations such as UPAGRA which become confronted with the difficulties of having to deal with a multiplicity of strategies which farmers develop for appropriating intervention.

Hence peasant political activity cannot be dissociated from the farmers' own attempts to construct their own patterns of farm, household and other types of organisation (see Long 1984b; Long and van der Ploeg 1989). Accordingly, struggles over access to land, credit, extension, etc. can only be understood within the context

⁶See Hindess (1986) on how interests are discursively constructed. As he puts it, "To say that interests are formulated is to insist on a further set of questions concerning the conceptual or discursive conditions necessary for certain reasons to be formulated at all. It is only if the appropriate reasons can be formulated that particular interests can be effective elements of social life" (p.119).

of farmers' attempts to attract and manage resources by creating their own 'development projects'. This is not to say that such projects embody the fundamental interests of an essentialized peasant class. On the contrary, local projects become the focus of conflicting pressures and demands put forward by groups - often coalitions - of actors. Such projects and attendant organisational forms, in effect, were more than mere efforts to unite farmers in order to attain concrete and material goals. They were not only means to attract scarce resources, but also ways to deal with particular problematic issues concerning local cooperation for community or production purposes and, as we saw in the various case studies, they evolved as arenas of struggle in which various views and interests clashed. Furthermore such projects and organisational efforts acquired a strategic meaning to the participants which went beyond their material significance. Indeed, the Association of Small Producers in Neguev, the road in Macadamia, and the aqueduct in La Isleta became the focal points of a set of struggles in which state officials and various groups of accommodative and critical farmers confronted each other. We saw that these, in some cases quite dramatic experiences generated strategies for appropriating intervention, which played a crucial role in the relations between farmers and bureaucrats.

Taking account of diversity in state-peasant relations entails giving precedence to the dynamics of farmers' organisational forms as against viewing diversity as effects of larger processes of state incorporation or socio-economic differentiation. This, in fact, required a determined way of dealing with the state, not as an apparatus which can be conquered, smashed and reconstructed, but as a set of organisations engaged in a variety of development and administrative practices. Thus, in constructing strategies for dealing with state intervention, farmers had to recognize: 1) the different faces of the state as manifested through inter-agency conflict, and the existence of differing operational styles within a single institution, and 2) the contradictions underlying the prevailing ideology of state intervention.

This approach, I think, precludes a view of peasant political activity in general terms of resistance. Next I discuss how an emphasis on development activity as arenas of struggle, together with a focus on the strategic character of state-peasant relations, differs from a perspective which focuses on everyday resistance'.

Critique of the 'Everyday Forms of Resistance' perspective

Of late a number of works have appeared discussing state-peasant relations within an analytical framework of resistance. The genre has been introduced by James Scott in his fine work "Weapons of the Weak" (1985), who in transcending the moral economy view of peasant economy undertakes an analysis of peasant strategies from a phenomenological perspective; that is by taking into account the role of actor's symbolic interactions and interpretations in the evolution of struggles following the introduction of modern technology (High Yielding Rice Varieties in combination with mechanical harvesting). Scott focuses on peasants' resistance against the attempts of farming elites to change the existing balance of rights and obligations regulating access to labour and land, with a view to rearranging social relations of production in line with modern technology, and in so doing he is able to provide a fascinating view of the skill with which 'the rural poor' are able to draw upon existing moral bonds in order to thwart such attempts.

One important advantage of this new perspective over former approaches of the moral economy type is that it introduces agency within the account. By showing that "poor peasants" are capable of devising and applying a myriad of tactics deriving from everyday knowledge geared to subverting the effectiveness of a new capitalist rural

order the image of the peasants shifts from that of a reactive class into that of purposeful social actors engaged in an active symbolic struggle and capable of drawing on existing relations of reciprocity in order to propose their own livelihood projects. In this way the image of 'peasant traditionality' as proposed in his previous work on The Moral Economy of The Peasant (1976), is revised. In addition, by discussing Gramscian and Luckacsian concepts of hegemony, Scott's perspective proposes an interesting explanation for the seemingly unorganized and informal nature of peasant political activity. Scott thereby argues that given the embeddedness of peasant politics in communal social relations, it is for them much more advantageous to 'work the system' than engage in confrontational politics. Underlying this thesis rests a strong view of peasant political consciousness, which does not manifest itself in open political conflict but within the struggle over the legitimacy of the moral order. Thus Scott suggests that peasants have a good understanding of their livelihood conditions as a subordinated and exploited class, yet this insight does not lead to revolutionary action due to the difficulty of coordinating collective struggles in everyday contexts with the aim to impose a new order. As argued, this organizational drawback deriving from the dispersion and fragmentary nature of acts of 'resistance' is advantageous to peasants as it provides them with the opportunity to shift class conflict to the realm of ordinary events and situations.

Yet, I think that this approach has some inherent limitations, due to a number of presuppositions it makes regarding the nature of the peasantry and its relationship with the state. Thus there is a tendency to portray peasants as embodying fundamental social interests, which are presumed to constitute them as distinct from other social categories, such as urban dwellers, large landowners, bureaucrats, etc. At a theoretical level, it can be argued that essentialist conceptions of the peasantry as displaying a unified form of consciousness is the result of, in my view, an inconsistent combination of a phenomenological approach to peasant politics and a political economy approach.⁷ Indeed, I think that a search for some general theory of resistance grounded in some essentialist conception of peasants can only lead to a profusion of rather simplistic accounts.⁸ It is my argument that we cannot understand peasant forms of political action, without analysing the history of the relationship with the bureaucracy. Only within the context of such local histories can we understand why farmers resist, undermine, appropriate or accommodate to state activity.

⁷See for an interesting discussion of essentialism as used in orientalist discourse Inden (1991, p.2).

⁸In the Costa Rican case this line of thought has been adopted by Leslie Anderson (1990) who attempts to establish a theory of non-violent peasant collective action through which "peasants can make a positive contribution to their societies and improve their own welfare" (pp.89). Here an image of peasant political action emerges that eventually fits with the best of all worlds. First, peasant organizations are by definition labelled as the legitimate and accepted representatives of 'peasants'. There is no mention about the struggle for legitimacy in which peasant organizations are involved in winning the support of different groups of smallholders, in mutual competition with the state. Second, absolutely no attention is paid to the contradictions between smallholders, owing to their differential involvement in socio-economic and political activities, and the associated variation in types of relationships built with a set of state institutions, NGO's and functionaries. As I conducted research in one of the areas in which her field-research material was gathered, I was able to document the various arenas of struggle in which settlers are involved and which gave rise to particular modes of local politics characterized by competition and contradiction between different groups of settlers. This difference in approach, it must be mentioned, is due to a different methodology which questions essentializing and reifying discourses of peasants as 'historical' agents.

Conversely, focusing on differentiated forms of state activity implies paying special attention to policies, programmes, and projects which are made possible through a variety of modes of interinstitutional coordination, rather than viewing the state as some monolithic apparatus. Such bundles of state activity, in effect, have their own histories and trajectories, and these are largely shaped through the relationship with beneficiaries. Central in my approach, then, is not an analysis grounded in some view of the interests of the farmers vis-à-vis the interests of the state. Instead I attempt to analyse how bureaucrats define the interests of the state in terms of a set of experiences with particular groups of beneficiaries. What is important then is not how the state defends or imposes its interests upon farmers, but how a variety of - often contradictory - definitions are produced within this relationship, or interface.

Thus by taking account of the differential capacity of (groups of) farmers to shape their relationship with the state bureaucracy it is possible to account for types of peasant political activity which differ radically from 'resistance', such as fairly opportunistic ways of appropriating state intervention as in the case of gatekeepers strategies, or strategies which, in a manipulative vein, are directed to establishing effective modes of local organisation by taking advantage of local divisions, if not creating them.

Having said this, it is possible to criticize the idea that peasant resistance is about undermining a social order which is basically inimical to the interests of smallholders by displaying forms of tactical compliance (p.324-25). The notion of compliance conveys the idea that the hegemonic order of the state is accepted as legitimate. Yet, we see in the case studies that state legitimization is itself the subject of quite open struggles. As we saw in chapter 4 front-line workers themselves are forced to negotiate the authority of the state when dealing with farmers.

Thus, the characters described in this work - the gatekeepers, the communist Diego Casas and the preacher Ignacio - are, rather than subverting a social order, engaging in strategies for attracting state resources, by accomodating to certain forms of state intervention while resisting others. The intervention-coping strategies described in the case studies were distinctively activist. It was not a question of 'working the system' but that of developing capacities for dealing with bureaucrats, often to the detriment of other farmers. Resistance in relation to state intervention, in this view, cannot be seen as a universal analytical category, but rather as a strategy particular farmers deploy for dealing with particular types of bureaucratic connections.

9.4 Policyspeak and the Ideology of Intervention

In the course of the book it was argued that an intervention ideology arises through the local adaptation and transformation of particular conceptions of development and associated institutional views of how beneficiaries should be approached. In Chapter 5 a notion of social social strategy was put forward as brought about through the localization of a variety of discourses, those of democracy/citizenship, community and agricultural modernization. It was also argued that strategies include skills of enrolment and practical knowledge of how to deal with state intervention. In avoiding an intentionalist or functionalist conception of social strategy a choice was made for a practice-oriented approach. The question I wish to address here is how does an approach which focusses on discursive practices differ from other phenomenological or social constructivist approaches?

The pitfalls of a social constructivist analysis

The question could be phrased as follows. What contribution can a social constructivist analysis⁹ make to a theoretical understanding of state intervention and its appropriation by farmers, that goes beyond deconstructing structuralist state theories and empiricist intervention models? Or in other words, what are the theoretical implications of an approach which focuses on social practice while rejecting positivist notions of replicability? Indeed, social constructivism has been much criticized for its inability to bring into the analysis broader issues concerning power relations that transcend the situated social contexts in which individuals interact, and thus has been labelled voluntaristic.

For one thing, it must be conceded that social constructivism has not been very good in tackling questions regarding how those social contexts are being influenced and manipulated by social actors remaining outside of them. Yet, in my view, this does not yet mean that we should introduce objectivistic notions of 'structure', as determining, shaping or underlying situated social practices. It is enough to recognize that the actions of actors - such as institutional managers - who operate within some sorts of social contexts, do impinge on that of other actors - such as settlers - in different contexts, without having to assume a fixed power-hierarchy between them, or some principle of sociological causality or determination. This is not to say that power plays no role in the actions of USAID planners, IDA managers, Regional Directors and Settlement Heads, yet the power they purportedly wield cannot be understood in terms of their capacity to impose their wills, but in terms of their ability to secure control over the effects of the social practices they are engaged in, even though these effects are often very different from what they set out to achieve. In other words, as long as state managers are able to 'prove' that that which is under their control is determinant, while that which lies outside their control is secondary to the 'real' obstacles to development, can they claim that they exercise power. Power, then, does not reside in the capacity of so called power-holders to impose their projects, but in their ability to deal with a given set of problems by developing specific ways for conceptualizing such problems and dealing with them, in short, by engaging in the production and deployment of a discourse of development.¹⁰

⁹By social constructivism I understand a range of subjectivistic approaches, such as phenomenology and ethnomethodology and hermeneutics, that take an interest in studying how social actors construct the social world as meaningful. In this view, social institutions, cultural artefacts and organisational forms are not seen as culturally 'given', but as the outcome of the accomplishments of members.

¹⁰My view on the interrelations between discourse, power and knowledge draw heavily upon work conducted in the sociology of science (Law 1986, Latour 1986, Callon 1986), which sets out to deconstruct the power of science. The question they put forward is not the classical one of 'how do we explain the success of science', but 'how is science capable to transform the social and the natural world by enrolling a variety of actors (not only human actors, but also elements of nature and thought) within an actor-network, translating their interests and finally producing passive agents who cannot do anything else but think of themselves, or define themselves, in terms of the categories, concepts and explanatory frameworks' proposed by science'. It is argued by this new approach to the study of science, that the power of 'science' lies in these social processes of 'translation' and 'enrolment', and not in its being a kind of knowledge that is intrinsically superior to other forms of non-scientific knowledge. Science, then, is analysed as a cultural system whereby a particular kind of authority is enforced; what previously was the power of religion, has been replaced in modern times by the power of those who have the key to the authoritative representation of 'progress', 'development', etc. In short, they set out to show that scientific knowledge is not universal and 'true' knowledge, but the outcome of a particular conjunction of power and knowledge.

This, in short, requires us to go beyond social constructivism and to inquire into the relationship between bureaucratic power and development discourse. Next, before discussing three concepts which might be useful for a sociology of intervention - those of development discourse, intervention ideology and intervention-coping strategy - I will outline the different ways in which I use the notion of discourse in relation to interpretation and power in the book.

Discourse and power

In Chapter 1, four different possible ways of using the concept of 'discourse' were distinguished: 1) As a way of identifying the patterns by which a public debate unfolds, 2) As referring to the various accounts and interpretations which are available to the researcher when working out a case study or situational analysis, 3) As a particular conjuncture between power and knowledge, and 4) As a particular kind of practice by which a particular problematic is made intelligible and manageable within a policy context.

To begin with, discourse can refer to the ways in which a public debate unfolds. This definition did not play an important role in the book, except when analysing some public event (the inauguration of the aqueduct in Tierragrande). For the rest, an actor oriented approach was used which set out to document who says what, in what context and in relation to which problems.

The second definition of discourse relates to the intricacies involved in interpreting the accounts of our informants, that is of representing them within our evolving narrative. In this regard a discourse oriented approach has advantages as it does not work with pre-conceived theoretical frameworks which are imposed upon the field materials. The actor's own interpretations of events and situations play an important role in the analysis. This is not to say that we do not apply analytical concepts, but that these are chosen and discarded to the degree to which they help to develop the text. We see here that a process of negotiation takes place between different kinds of thinking and interpreting: the everyday one of the 'field', expressing a 'dialogue' between researcher and researched, and the analytical one of the academy.

So far it can be said that the first and second uses of 'discourse' pertain to the language paradigm (Bernstein 1983). The third and fourth build upon a post-structuralist conception of power.

Policyspeak

The third conception of discourse has to do with a codified way of representing a particular problematic which is embodied in forms of state activity. This is the Foucaultian conception of discourse where the link is made between knowledge and power. In this view, discourse is far more consequential than mere 'interpretation', as it

Although in developing the conceptual framework of intervention-coping strategies I have been inspired by this research agenda my approach is different. The aim has not been that of showing how 'development discourse' is capable to produce passive agents who in conforming to its diagnosis, access structures and eligibility procedures become subjects ready to enter a 'therapeutic relationship' (Wood 1985) with authority-holders. In fact, the ethnography in this book provides so much evidence for the contrary thesis, that the power of intervention is very often successfully undermined. For that reason I set out to develop an analytical framework by which it was possible to study how 'powerless' actors are able to undermine the power of the state through strategies of intervention-coping.

is seen as constituting an objective mode of knowledge, which in association with particular forms of social control leads to the creation of subjectivities. Here discourse has a degree of facticity. Thus it can be analysed by studying, say, medical textbooks in order to document the genealogy of the concepts and practices of healing and its relation to the rise of particular institutional forms, say the clinic. This conception of discourse was not used in this book, yet it underpins the fourth way in which discourse has been used.

Four, discourse can be seen as the kinds of discursive practice by which linkages are made between a given set of issues (agricultural innovation, the struggle over land, and issues of governability) so as to construct a problematic (say agricultural development policy). Through such a problematic a way of conceptualizing peasants as 'traditional', or the organization of access to institutional services, or the implementation of policy, is forged. By making such links a way of speaking about, say, agricultural development policy is created. Discursive practice, then, is not only the deployment of particular arguments or representations of reality, but the creation of a particular way of dealing with and conceptualizing what are basically very different problems, by establishing connections between them. Here we find that the notion of discursive practice is related to Foucault's concept of power, since it can be shown that the kinds of conceptual linkages policy-speak makes is related to the needs of exercising control of planners. In short, policy-speak (Apthorpe 1986;1986) creates problematics by bestowing a particular logic, that of the planners, on different sets of issues. In this way a kind of mechanistic thinking is forged which we can find in operation when, for instance, peasants are classified into four categories (allegiant and alienated activists, allegiant and alienated apathetics in the O34 programme inception paper).

Indeed, we saw in Chapter 3 that by drawing upon a historical representation of Costa Rica as a country without fundamental social contradictions until the advent of capitalism it is possible to portray the major problems of 'development' as an institutional a-political issue, that is in terms of the government's capacity to distribute land to landless peasants. In this way it becomes possible to conceptualize the agrarian question in terms of administrative efficiency while denying the existence of a diversity of state-peasant relationships, let alone their political history. Accordingly, all types of peasant politics which question the nature of Costa Rican democracy and its economic model are conceptualized as a potential threat to the survival of 'democracy' in Costa Rica. This historical representation of state-peasant relations makes it possible to forge a strategy of institutional modernization in which the beneficiary is conceptualized as a client who has to be encouraged to follow the steps of his presumed yeoman forebears, that is, to become an entrepreneurial farmer. Farmers who deviate from this model of the democratic, 'white', yeoman farmer, in turn can be labelled troublesome. Policyspeak, thus, has distinct effects on 'beneficiaries', through the invention of models which are incorporated in development programmes and projects. Yet, it was argued in the case of the O34 Programme, that policyspeak, as manifested in the model of the 'client', was not capable of concealing the conflictive and political character of planned intervention at the level of implementation.

An example: policyspeak and agricultura de cambio

Policyspeak can be seen at work in the case of the agricultural development policy of *agricultura de cambio*, as applied in the Atlantic zone. Thus we obtain a particular, in fact in logical terms, arbitrary connection between the following problems,

- a) The necessity to curtail maize production given PL480 wheat coming from USA aid, made available thanks to wheat overproduction in the USA.
- b) The necessity to combat increasing rural discontent as manifested in land invasions and other forms of squatting, etc.
- c) The necessity to shift to an export-oriented policy under pressure of the World Bank, the IMF, USAID, etc.

The solution to these problems is found in the introduction of new agricultural technologies and the creation of incentives for 'innovative farmers'. However, the fact that the problem does not lie in a lack of access to technology but in the monopolization of export opportunities by entrepreneurs linked to the political system, the fact that squatters are only allowed to invade the worst lands while excellent land is used for cattle grazing, the fact that the plantations create disabled people which are disposed of without pensions, etc., are silenced.

In effect, the discourse of agricultural modernization in Costa Rica creates a problematic which excludes these facts, while establishing connections between a variety of issues. These connections are constructed in such a way that they contain 'escape hatches' or explanations for failure in case the policy fails to achieve what it sets out to achieve. In this way *agricultura de cambio* is naturalized so as to acquire a degree of inevitability, and the impression is created that no other policy was possible given the circumstances. At the same time policyspeak is institutionalized in programmes, modes of inter-institutional cooperation, reseach agendas etc.

Thus as *agricultura de cambio* becomes part of a zone of inevitability (see Shaffer 1984), it is presented as a question of instilling the right mentality, the right incentives, the right technology, the right connection with export markets; in short, the right implementation of policy. In case of failure, then, the problem becomes 'the human factor'; the farmer who was not ready for the technology, the incentives which were not well applied, the technology which was not timely transferred. The policy, plan or programme did not fail but its implementation did. In other words policyspeak is never wrong since it creates its own problematic, as well as the rationalizations for accounting for possible failures.

Policyspeak, then, is not simply a mystification for it creates a distinct reality, that of public policy. If it is not able to relate to the realities of the farmers, of implementation, it is able to relate to the world it creates, by constructing problematics which become embodied in programmes, modes of eligibility, IRDP's. In the process, a number of 'facts' are spirited away and questions disregarded, such as the fact that technological innovations most often are introduced by farmers themselves.

Yet, as argued above, the world of policyspeak is but one segment of the wider reality of intervention.

The multiple meanings of development: the ideology of intervention

However, this book focused for the largest part on the world 'beyond' policyspeak. It is clear in this book that actions undertaken at the policy level as to the design and implementation of the integrated rural development project, had enormous consequences for the everyday-life of farmers in distant settlements. It was also argued that it is more interesting to view such actions within the context of power struggles between managers holding to differing institutional projects, than as responding to some model (or ideology) of development. State intervention, in this account, does not

appear as a linear process in which state managers exert their power over settler/beneficiaries in line with any conscious or unconscious logic.

It was also shown that state intervention exhibited its own local dynamics as manifested in the transformation of a particular model of the beneficiary, viewed as a client, and in a variety of strategies of intervention-coping. The model of the client, which was introduced by USAID planners, was deployed by the front-line administrators as an instrument for accomplishing social control, and led front-line workers to fashion styles of operation for dealing with settlers who were labelled as recalcitrant, uncooperative, and opportunistic, through practices of labelling and legitimization.

It is important to emphasize that the ideology of intervention was not imposed from the top onto the thinking of the front-line workers and administrators responsible for programme implementation. What it did, however, was to bring together different worlds of experience and forms of socio-political commitment: that of front-line workers, administrators and institutional managers. In effect, it provided various actors operating within institutional worlds a common language for talking about and assessing intervention problems.

An ideology of intervention, then, is not false in the sense that it clouds the thinking of the actors drawing upon it. It derives its power from its usefulness for accomplishing particular bureaucratic tasks, even when the actors themselves are constantly confronted with the fact that they are simplifications, if not caricatures, of a more complex reality, and that their application is restricted to specific settings.¹¹ When talking about intervention ideologies, then, we should ask by whom are they used, in what settings (in the administrative setting, or the field), against whom and for what purposes are they deployed. And, finally, how do farmers deal with them?

As argued in chapters 3 and 4 an intervention ideology is not simply false or untrue. Instead we can better view it as a set of discursive practices geared to reaching specific localized effects. It was shown that a particular model of the client, which was underscored by a distinctive reading of Costa Rican history was transformed at the level of implementation in a model of the undeserving client which, in turn, played a central role in the development of labelling practices. The model of the undeserving client was put to different uses by different actors: by planners it was a solution for institutional inefficiency, for the General Manager it was a mode of increasing implementation efficiency, for the Regional Director it served as a legitimization for a new mode of exercising social control. For the front-line workers it became an element of an ideology of intervention which was instrumental in 1) rationalizing failure, 2) protecting front-line workers from 'troublesome' farmers, 3) providing a guideline for selecting 'cooperative' settlers, 4) providing easy explanations to complex issues, and 5) legitimizing the current state of affairs.

One major theoretical topic for a sociology of intervention is that of analysing the longer term effects a particular type of intervention might have on the functioning of the local bureaucracy. Thus it can be argued for the case of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica that, although the O34 IRDP became a failure, a particular way of relating to beneficiaries remained which was based on a model of the 'undeserving client'. Indeed,

¹¹Thus Eagleton (1990) warns of overestimating the success of ideology which as he argues is no 'seamless whole'. For, "if its impulse is to identify and homogenize, it is nevertheless scarred and disarticulated by its relational character; by the conflicting interests among which it must ceaselessly negotiate (222)".

one effect of the intervention ideology generated by the 034 IRDP was that previous forms of political clientelism were supplanted by forms of bureaucratic clientelism.

This is not to say that beneficiaries were effectively incorporated into the institutional system, nor that politics were eliminated from the 'bureaucratic connection'. Instead a different relationship with the state was established in which front-line worker had to carry the burden of having to defend the face of the state, that is to legitimize state activity in the face of the contradictions of state intervention. In effect, politics was displaced to the social interfaces between bureaucracy and beneficiaries, and the result was the resurgence of clientelism in a new guise, as bureaucratic clientelism.

Discursive practice and intervention-coping strategies

An important theme in this book has been how farmers/beneficiaries develop capacities to deal with bureaucrats by enrolling them within their own projects or by undermining their authority. This implied that they had to master the language of 'development' as deployed in the bureaucratic domain. Thus I distinguished three different kinds of discursive practice which had an institutional referent and were related to three problematics; that of 1) community, 2) agricultural modernization, and 3) citizenship and democracy.

These three kinds of discursive practice in Costa Rica are prevalent in dealing with the problematic of 'development', for reasons which have much to do with the country's specific socio-institutional history. Thus the extent of the population's access to institutional services in Costa Rica is remarkably high. At the same time the two-party political system associated with recurrent change of regime, and the central role which party politics plays in institutional life, offers ample opportunities to organised groups to engage in political negotiations with state agencies.

These types of discursive practice referred to a set of issues which were shared by both the state officials and local actors: communal services and infrastructure; production; interest representation. These discourses entailed ways of getting access to resources by shaping relationships with state institutions (education, credit, legal protection, land, etc.). The relevant institutions in this regard were 1) local authorities, and community organisations, 2) agricultural development projects, banks, extension services, but also regional institutions (JAPDEVA), and 3) the organisations (political parties) composing the political and legal system.

Farmer's discursive practices and practical knowledge

It was also argued that farmers in dealing with state intervention had to develop a capacity to master these discourses, which meant developing practical knowledge about how local authorities, the banking system, extension services, marketing boards, etc. function, and how the political system operates, with a view to gaining access to resources, while attempting to fashion their relationships with state institutions. Farmer's discursive practices, thus, were by definition not institutionally located. They entailed among other things a 'localization' of the discourses discussed above. Localization was defined as the practice of connecting such discourses with the local reality of 'community', production and political interest articulation. Concrete and pragmatic meaning was given to discourse by relating it to local initiatives, failures, etc. It must be stressed, however, that farmer's discursive practices did not take place in a void. They were deployed within particular arenas of struggle: projects, types of local

organisation, etc. They dealt with concrete issues of how, why and to what purposes to approach or avoid a particular state agency, functionary, or politician.

Strategies and enrolment

The strategic localization of discourses of community, agricultural modernization and democracy in the frontier was not enough for the construction of strategies for appropriating intervention. After all it would be not only simplistic but plainly wrong to argue that strategies are successful due to the rhetorical skills of particular individuals. We saw this in the case of Neguev where a group of radical leaders were able to continuously question intervention by undermining the authority of the state, yet they were not particularly successful in mobilizing enough settlers to become a direct threat to the prevailing mode of state intervention.

Enrolment practices then involved the following types of activities: 1) that of convincing, persuading and mobilizing people towards the attainment of a specific goal, cause or project, and 2) that of making themselves indispensable as the 'translator' of the interests of some group of people vis-à-vis the bureaucracy. Indeed people such as Ignacio were highly skilled in such enrolment practices.

Thus we see that one central element in the success of a particular strategy for appropriating intervention was the capacity of some actors to enrol a variety of actors in particular projects. Indeed, it can be argued that the success of a particular strategy for appropriating intervention was equivalent to successful enrolment. And successful enrolment entailed the capacity to negotiate alliances with a variety of actors so as to make possible a particular project, or to foil that of one's opponents.

In short, successful enrolment entailed that alternative rival strategies were made impossible, or invalidated, as a logic of action was established which corresponded to one, and only one, particular way of conceptualizing a set of problems which have to do with local 'development'.

The following can be said of the strategies beneficiaries developed in order to deal with intervention. The gatekeepers in Neguev were able to establish an alliance with front-line workers while presenting themselves as loyal beneficiaries who were ready to combat a communist ideology which was alien to the interests of peaceful Costa Rican peasants. The 'communist' Diego Casas in Macadamia set out to show to the community that, since IDA bureaucrats acted according to political interests which were contrary to those of the peasants, IDA intervention could only lead to local division and organizational disruption. Ignacio in La Isleta was able to make himself indispensable in the completion of the aqueduct project by presenting himself to his fellow settlers as the only local leader with undisputed access to state agencies, and to bureaucrats as the legitimate representative of poor peasants in the frontier.

The only strategy which was not successful, that of establishing tactical distance in Neguev, was due to the inability of accommodative beneficiaries to develop a way of talking about the interests of farmers as different from, and possible contradictory to, those of the state.

Next I compare my approach with others which draw upon post-structuralist notions of power as developed by Foucault and which concentrate on the power effects of planned intervention.

9.5 The Unruly Strike Back: The Issue of Agency

In brief, post-structuralism conceptualizes the power of the state in terms of modes and techniques of subjection and 'normalization', by which people are transformed into state-subjects and eventually transmuted into docile bodies, or passive agents. Such techniques and strategies of subjection may consist of institutionalized practices of classification by which people are ascribed a subjectivity in terms of the categories used in particular institutions (the 'patient' in the clinic, the 'poor' in the security system, etc.) or through the micro-practices of disciplinary power by which the state is able to gain control of people's bodies while making the actual workings of power invisible (Foucault 1982, 1986).¹²

Comparisons with a post-structuralist approach

Ferguson (1990), for instance, adopts such a perspective when studying a World-Bank funded Integrated Rural Development Programme in Lesotho. He shows that through the deployment of a development discourse a particular representation of the 'development problematic' is produced which has nothing to do with the 'reality' of Lesotho, and even blatantly contradicts mainstream academic discourse. Yet, Ferguson argues, that this simplified understanding of the 'development problematic' is not accidental as it underpins actual practices of intervention as in the case of the IRDP project he studied. Such projects, he argues, have distinctive 'instrument-effects' in practice, namely the expansion of state power and the depoliticization of planned intervention. The notion of 'instrument-effect' is borrowed by Ferguson from Foucault's discussion of prison reform. In short, the instrument-effect of the prison, as a correctional institution, lies in the fact that it does not lead to the rehabilitation of transgressors but, on the contrary, to the constitution of delinquency as a mode of subjectivity disconnected from its social origins. Prison reform, then, appears to be an element within a set of techniques of exercising social control, a part of a strategy for "taming 'popular illegalities' and transforming the political fact of illegality into the quasi-medical one of pathological 'delinquency'" (p.19). As Ferguson puts it,

"The prison, Foucault shows, was created as a correctional institution. It was intended to imprint on the inmates the qualities of good citizenship: to make criminals into honest, hard working, law abiding individuals, who could return to a 'normal' place in society.... But it is obvious upon inspection, according to Foucault, that prisons do not in fact 'reform' criminals; that, on the contrary, they make nearly impossible that return to 'normality' that they have always claimed to produce, and that, instead of eliminating criminality, they seem rather to produce and intensify it within a well-defined strata of 'delinquents'" (Ferguson 1990:19).

¹²Thus Foucault (1986), in criticizing the current notion of what he designates juridical power, as power deriving from the sovereign, puts forward a notion of disciplinary power which is embodied in state practices of social control. He illustrates the transition from the first type of power to the second by comparing the practice of public torture in the classical age with the rise of the prison in the modern age. In the prison, punishment is secluded from the public arena and consequently the exercise of power is made invisible (1977).

Ferguson applies the notion of 'instrument-effect' to account for the the paradox that development failures are so readily replicated. An 'instrument-effect', then, is the unintended, yet strategically coherent effect of planned intervention which comes about through the deployment of what he calls 'the development apparatus'. In his view it is not accidental that planned intervention leads so often to failure. Indeed, failure is a logical concomitant of planned intervention.¹³

In this perspective, the development apparatus is a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which as he argues, "incidentally takes 'poverty' at its point of entry", while depoliticizing the relationship between people and the state (p.255). Ferguson argues that this two-fold character of the 'instrument-effect' - the expansion of the bureaucratic state through the depoliticization of its workings - "end up forming [a] kind of strategically coherent or intelligible whole... : the anti-politics machine". As he claims,

"while we have seen that 'development' projects ... may end up working to expand the power of the state, and while they claim to address the problems of poverty and deprivation, in neither guise does the 'development' industry allow its role to be formulated as a political one. By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of 'development' is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized in the world today" (256).

This approach provides a highly suggestive explanation why so many development projects, after having first been evaluated as failures are, after a few years, promoted as successes, as it is argued that the success of planned intervention lies in the capacity of the state to expand its power. Yet, as I argue next, this view tells us little about how local actors come to grips with the 'development apparatus'. For, if we hold to Foucaults analogy of the prison in studying the 'power-effects' of planned intervention, we have to show that the subjects of development are transformed into marginal characters, and that they, in their relationship with the state, can conceive of themselves only in such terms, as 'deviants'. If this is not the case, then, it is important to inquire into the social practices by which farmers engage with the state; practices which, as argued in this book, might range from accomodation to resistance and manipulation.

The O34 programme and its instrument-effects

In applying these concepts to the O34 integrated rural development programme, I studied, it can be argued that the instrument effects of the O34 programme were the introduction of a novel type of institution-client relationship, one in which labelling as a mode of social control, and depoliticization played an important role. Indeed, although the whole idea of integrated rural development was eventually given up as it clearly appeared to lead to failure, the effect of the project was that a new way of dealing with settlers was introduced which conceptualized them as (undeserving) clients and which made it easier to deploy a highly authoritarian and disciplinarian set of practices.

¹³Thus he argues, "... Because 'failed' development projects can so successfully help to accomplish important tasks behind the backs of the most sincere participants, it does become less mysterious why 'failed' development projects should end up being replicated again and again. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that it may even be because development projects turn out to have such uses, even if they are in some sense unforeseen, that they continue to attract so much interest and support" (p.256).

Yet there are problems with such an analysis because it suggests a degree of determinism and unilinearity which the evidence does not bear. To begin with, 'failure' in the case of the Neguev settlement, was not accepted as a natural and thus inevitable fact. Front-line workers and administrators drew upon an ideology of intervention to rationalize failure, yet their actions were constantly being contested by various groups of settlers. Indeed, the critical and radical discourse of radical settlers became part of all farmers' thinking, in fact it always was a sort of 'critical discourse' that farmers of different persuasion could draw upon. The result of the programme was definitely not depoliticization, for it led to a different type of politics: that of state legitimization.

On the other hand, planners and managers were not naive, they were aware of the political character of intervention, of the necessity to control a 'difficult' social situation. Politics could be concealed at the level of documents, even within the domains of the institution and local administration, but not in encounters between bureaucrats and 'clients', the client-official interface.

Second, it appeared impossible to transform 'unruly clients' into ideal beneficiaries. For that reason local administrators had to draw upon a social darwinist theory of settlement development. At the same time the new intervention ideology led to a variety of intervention-coping strategies (accommodation, resistance, manipulation), with as a result the emergence of differing kinds of institution-client relationships. The IDA was not able to impose its own definition of interests upon the settlers, let alone a standardized and depoliticized type of institution-client relationship.

Third, no coherent institutional apparatus evolved. As shown in Chapter 2 institutional rivalry remained and depoliticization at the institutional level was not accomplished. The question is whether this could ever have been achieved. The institution, thus, evolved as an arena in which different projects competed without any of them acquiring hegemony. In effect, each project led to particular sets of practices which reflected upon institution-client relationships in differing areas of the country.

In conclusion, it can be argued that a new mode of social control, which included labelling and a social darwinist intervention ideology, was introduced. Yet, as the cases of Diego Casas and Ignacio show it appeared impossible to impose such novel forms without engaging in forms of local negotiation with local actors. Neither was there any evidence that this model would be any more successful than the previous 'paternalist' one. It has been shown that 'labelling' and the model of the client as a practice of social control in places such as Neguev replaced previous forms of 'paternalism' through which settlers maintained strong relationships with officials in the central departments in San José. Yet, as Chapter 6 shows, when discussing the practices of gatekeepers, the attempts to introduce a new, non-clientelist mode of institution-client relationship, led to the rise of novel forms of bureaucratic clientelism.

The development apparatus and agency

In my view, post-structuralist thought is very valuable as it teaches us to be suspicious about development discourse, about its tendency to make invisible what in fact are ways of deploying power. In this respect the work of authors such as Ferguson is important. Yet, I think that portraying 'the development apparatus' in a quasi-conspiratorial way, as the source of evil is an analytical strategy which adds little to our understanding of the contingencies of localized struggles between bureaucrats and beneficiaries. Furthermore, I think that instead of searching for different sites where 'resistance' or forms of 'alternative development' might be engendered outside the world of development as Ferguson (279-288) suggests, it is more fruitful to analyse how various actors appropriate the discourse of development and develop strategies

which have more bearing upon the complexities of their local struggles than that of some abstract 'apparatus'. This requires that we develop a strong notion of agency.

The 'development apparatus', of which the O34 IRD Programme formed part, is not a monolithic, nor coherent whole. If it has a degree of coherence and intelligibility it is at the level of 'policy discourse', and not necessarily at the level of actual practice. What is important, then, is to inquire into how agency is produced in different fields, arenas or patterns of social relationships, as an outcome of struggle between different groups holding to differing commitments and understandings. In following this path we might show that the 'development apparatus' is neither a benign enterprise as argued by its apologists, nor a frightful machine as portrayed by post-structuralists such as Ferguson. Instead it becomes an arena in which multiple and contrasting social meanings and forms of agency are produced.

9.6 Final Remarks

I agree with authors such as James Ferguson (1990), Bernard Shaffer (1985) and Raymond Apthorpe (1986), that an important point of critique is that of showing how 'policyspeak' or 'dev-speak' constructs categories, labels and classificatory schemes which are instrumental in subordinating people to bureaucratic power.¹⁴ Development discourse reduces a great diversity of farmers with different backgrounds, aspirations and commitments into a category of 'clients' who are then labelled traditional, poor, indigent, etc. Such a discursive construction of the 'development problematic' has more to do with practices of governability than with the real life of smallholders, small merchants, plantation workers, leaders of peasant unions, etc. A paramount task, then, is to study the bureaucratic practices by which these categories, labels and schemes are constructed.

In proposing a methodology for studying how development intervention is appropriated by its 'targets', 'clients', beneficiaries, or by the 'rural poor', I think that we should be suspicious of modes of legitimation of the development business which derives its justification by the following kind of argument: Despite all failures and deceptions, despite all cynicism we might encounter, development is a good thing, and if you do not believe in it you are a skeptic, you do not believe in human solidarity. Instead, I prefer to take the view that the discourse of development is part of the problem, as it is inscribed in wider bureaucratic attempts to transform people first into clients, and then into docile state-subjects. The point, then, is that of analysing the degree of success of such attempts. Thus, I think that there are clear advantages in viewing 'development' as an arena of struggle in which 'beneficiaries' are able to negotiate the authority of the state. As for this book, the outcome of the analysis is clear: the new mode of intervention which emerged through the O34 programme lacked the consistency, intelligibility and coherence of the instrument-effects analysed by James Ferguson. Instead, farmers were able to take advantage of the contradictions and limitations of state planned intervention.

Central in my approach, then, is how differing forms of agency are constructed within different relationships between authority-holders and 'people'. Thus for experts, agency entails the right to 'represent' other people such as peasants and recipients of

¹⁴In a different context authors such as Said (1978) and Fabian (1983) have shown how a particular representation of 'the other' is produced through academic practice.

state service as 'traditional', rationally risk-averse, marginalized or exploited. For front-line workers, it means the capacity to create room for manoeuvre by increasing discretion while negotiating the extent to which they are accountable to superiors or the beneficiaries. Finally, agency means to farmers the capability to choose not to become recipients of state services, to confront the authorities or to accommodate to them, or conversely to penetrate and manipulate state bureaucracies.

Appendix

A short note on state-peasant relations in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica

Here an outline is presented of the broader economic and political context of state-peasant relations in Costa Rica. This is followed by a summary discussion of the history of UPAGRA, the Union of Small Agricultural Producers of the Atlantic zone.

The socio-economic context

With changes in the world economy in the 1970s the prevailing import-substitution policy in Costa Rica became more and more difficult to sustain, and was forced to compete with the increasing popularity of the ascendant neo-liberal global economic discourse. In short, the oil shocks of the 1970s, increased interest rates, the decline in trade and the collapse of the Central American Common Market due to political turmoil in the region, formed a formidable threat to the hitherto remarkably success -in terms of sustained social peace - of the reformist development strategy. Indeed, the impact of the economic crisis of 1980-82, during the period of Carazo (1978-1982), was unprecedented: GNP declined by 10 per cent, national income fell by 22 per cent and per capita income was reduced by 25 per cent (Vunderink 1990:6). In consequence, Costa Rica became overly dependent on financial donors in confronting the economic crisis.

Still, thanks to its geopolitical location, Costa Rica was able to benefit from the special interest the USA had in its socio-economic performance. Indeed, the latter set out, through USAID and by utilizing its influence in international finance organisations, to impose upon Costa Rica a neo-liberal economic model consistent with its new conception of political and economic relations within the region. In effect, the collapse of the economy in the beginning of the eighties was prevented by a dramatic increase in USA financial aid, to the extent that Costa Rica became the second highest recipient of USA aid per capita in the world, after Israel (Sanders 1986; Crosby 1987 quoted in Vunderink). As most analysts agree, the improvement in economic performance was due to this massive influx of foreign aid rather than to the new economic orientation, making the social costs of structural adjustment more bearable. However, as Vunderink argues, this economic success was not only artificial, it also "reduced the number of economic policy alternatives that could have been considered in Costa Rica in the 1980s".(9) Accordingly, the policy of structural adjustment involved a whole reorganisation of the economy, and especially the agricultural sector, making it more dependent on export production.

At the same time development organisations such as USAID embarked unabashedly upon a policy of intervening in the internal affairs of Costa Rica, aimed at transforming the institutional environment with a view to making it more responsive to the new development strategy propounded. The O34 Programme I concentrated on, in fact, was an early effort at institutional modernization, and as we will see, institutional

reform at the IDA acquired a dynamic of its own as it became the arena of struggles of various bureaucratic factions.

The policy context: agricultura de cambio

The neo-liberal economic model supported by international financial organizations entailed the curtailing of a number of state programmes benefitting peasant farmers. In view of the major concern with comparative advantage and the reorientation of the economy to international markets, the budgets of state agencies involved in the agricultural sector were cut and their programmes reoriented towards stimulating export production. A major initiative to involve smallholders in the new agrarian strategy, the policy of *agricultura de cambio* (transformational agriculture), was undertaken by the Arias administration (1986-1990). Its major aim was that of promoting non-traditional export products, while increasing the productivity of traditional crops. In effect, this programme was directed to terminating subsidies on crops such as corn and beans, major cash crops for cultivators in the lowlands. Up to then, it had been the task of the marketing board, the *Consejo Nacional de Producción*, the marketing board, to purchase grains at fair prices, which were then sold to consumers at below market value, in this way subsidizing both producers and consumers. Since these subsidies contributed to the public sector deficit, the Ministry of Agriculture, under pressure from the Central Bank, decided to support the increased importation of basic grains, through the PL 480 Programme, in order to satisfy the demands of the internal market. In addition, priority in credit delivery was accorded to export crops rather than given to basic grain producers and the role of the national marketing board (the CNP) was considerably curtailed.

The new policy of *agricultura de cambio* entailed that smallholders be encouraged to shift from traditional crops - maize - to non-traditional export crops, such as tubers, *pejivalle*, *maracuya*, *pineapple*, etc. Credit was to be extended only for such crops to groups of farmers who were willing to adopt modern technologies, and who had established marketing arrangements with export companies. This, in fact, meant breaking with the previous policies of extending credit to individual farmers for maize or other crops, which, in turn, were purchased by the CNP, the marketing board. The idea, therefore, was that henceforth institutions should extend credit and extension only to 'progressive' farmers, who were willing to create forms of local organisation dovetailed to the new agricultural policy.

The policy of *agricultura de cambio*, in association with the termination of the 034 Programme, had a decisive impact on the relationship between the IDA and its beneficiaries in the Neguev settlement. So far credit and extension were provided on an individual basis to beneficiaries, while a deep distrust existed on the part of the IDA Regional Office against independent modes of local organisation. However, with the new policy of *agricultura de cambio* local organisation for production purposes became a condition for farmers for obtaining credit. We will see in Chapter VI that the endeavour to create such modes of effective local organisation in Neguev gave rise to a struggle between competing groups of settlers.

The history of UPAGRA

At the end of the seventies, the *Unión de Pequeños Agricultores del Atlántico*, UPAGRA, came into being as a peasant organisation which aimed to defend the rights of smallholders in the northern part of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica. After a number of rather spectacular actions - including producers' strikes, marches, blockades and occupations of government offices, in which higher prices for products such as maize

and cassave and better marketing conditions were demanded, UPAGRA realized that a major obstacle for the 'peasant class' in the Atlantic zone remained access to land. UPAGRA drew its support from peasant colonists in the area of Guacimo-Guapiles, who had settled in the area with state support. These colonists had settled in areas - often called *colonias* - surrounding the railway, which had not been suitable for large-scale banana production. Before the collapse of the plantation economy in the thirties, they had dedicated themselves to small-scale banana and cocoa production and thereafter, with some support from the state marketing board (the CNP), had specialized in the production of maize - and to a lesser degree tubers - for the national market. In the seventies, the renewed expansion of the plantation economy led to land scarcity, which became an impediment for the aspirations of farmers' sons to become smallholders themselves. Hence UPAGRA embarked on the invasion of one of the largest 'haciendas' in the Atlantic Zone, that of Neguev, in what would be experienced by the state as a direct threat to its authority.

Although the invasion itself was a success the whole event was experienced as too exacting for those involved in it. Furthermore, as a result of it the relationship between UPAGRA and state institutions became highly strained. Thus UPAGRA changed its policy towards one of supporting the landed, while providing legal advice - and occasionally organisational support - to landless squatter groups. This emphasis on production problems - as against the land problem - led UPAGRA to search for cooperation with other farmers' unions, even those which they accused of being instruments of the state in their more radical period. One reason for this was that, as the agrarian crisis reached its peak at the end of the eighties, UPAGRA found itself less and less able to win concessions, even for the landed. This led to internal divisions in the organisation, and eventually to the desertion of some of the oldest and most dedicated leaders, as the current leadership was accused of becoming more and more estranged from the most needy of its constituents (the landless) while at the same time losing its capacity to defend the fate of the landed.

Despite this, UPAGRA has persisted in its efforts to be accepted as a legitimate and democratic peasant union within the existing political framework, while contesting the current agricultural policy. In keeping with this strategy it has been prepared to strike broad alliances with a variety of producers' organisations, some of them linked to strong entrepreneurial interests (as in the case of the rice producers of Guanacaste).

Abbreviations

ASBANA	Asociación Bananera Nacional
WAU	Wageningen Agricultural University
AyA	(Instituto de) Acueductos y Alcantarillados
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo
CATIE	Centro Agrónomo Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza
CNP	Consejo Nacional de Producción
DINADEDECO	Dirección Nacional de Desarrollo de la Comunidad
DOCAE	Departamento de Organización y Capacitación Empresarial
FENAC	Federación Nacional Agraria Campesina
FESIAN	Federación Sindical Agraria Nacional
IDA	Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMAS	Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social
INVU	Instituto de Vivienda y Urbanización
ITCO	Instituto de Tierras y Colonización
JAPDEVA	Junta Administrativa Portuaria y de Desarrollo Económico de la Vertiente Atlántica
MAG	Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería
MOPT	Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transporte
SPPAL	Sindicato de Pequeños Productores del Atlántico
UFCO	United Fruit Company
UPAGRA	Unión de Pequeños Agricultores del Atlántico
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Abstract

State-peasant relations in this book are studied by focussing on the strategies which farmers and bureaucrats deploy in a colonisation area of the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica in order to deal with forms of state intervention which include programmes, projects and other instruments of state policy. Existing studies of state intervention can be divided in two categories. First, there are works that view intervention as a policy activity and that pay little attention to the political role of intervention as an arena in which farmers and bureaucrats interact. And, second, there are studies which view state intervention as an instrument in the service of capitalist expansion, thus operating at the cost of the autonomy of smallholders.

My approach differs from these works inasmuch as it attempts to study intervention by focussing on the negotiation practices of bureaucrats and farmers. Central in the analysis, then, are not the formal intentions of a project or a programme. Neither are efforts made to uncover the 'hidden objectives' of intervention. Instead, I have undertaken a detailed analysis of how bureaucrats develop 'practices of intervention' including the labelling and classification of farmers, and of how farmers appropriate the resources and meanings of intervention in their dealings with state institutions. State intervention, in this perspective, has different consequences for different social actors, and presupposes the existence of conflicting interests.

The question which this dissertation addresses can be phrased as follows: What kinds of intervention practices do exist, and what can we say about the role of the state bureaucracy in agrarian development? And, on the other hand, how does state intervention shape the strategies farmers deploy in order to deal with the state bureaucracy?

The research addresses these issues by studying attempts by bureaucrats to transform farmers into clients in two settlements in the 'frontier'. 'Development' was defined by programme planners in a technical and apolitical way. The attempted transformation of farmers/settlers into clients went together with different kinds of labelling and classification practices which had effect in the administrative domain, but not in the process of service delivery. It appeared, then, that farmers developed strategies in order to appropriate, resist or manipulate intervention.

The findings of this research are of interest for students of intervention as well as for practitioners involved in development projects. It is argued that more attention should be paid to the politics of intervention. Notions of success and failure, therefore, should be viewed within the context of the interests, commitments and aspirations of a variety of actors such as policymakers, front-line workers and farmers.

Samenvatting

In dit boek worden staat-boeren relaties bestudeerd door aandacht te schenken aan de strategieën die boeren en burokraten in een kolonisatiegebied in de Atlantische zone van Costa Rica ontwikkelen om met vormen van staatsinterventie (zoals programma's, projecten en andere instrumenten van overheidsbeleid) om te gaan.

Bestaande studies naar staatsinterventie kunnen in twee categorieën verdeeld worden. Enerzijds zijn er studies die interventie zien als een bestuurlijke activiteit en weinig aandacht schenken aan de politieke betekenis van interventie als een arena waarin boeren en staatsfunctionarissen interacteren. Anderzijds zijn er studies die interventie beschouwen als een instrument om kapitalistische expansie te stimuleren, meestal ten koste van de autonomie van kleine boeren. Staatsinterventie wordt in deze visie gezien als een middel om boeren te inkorporeren in formele staatsverbanden. Mijn benadering verschilt van deze studies in die zin dat ze poogt interventie te bestuderen door naar de onderhandelingspraktijken van burokraten en boeren te kijken. Als uitgangspunt voor de analyse van interventie in de landbouw worden dus niet de formele intenties van een projekt of programma genomen. Ook wordt er niet gepoogd de 'verborgen doeleinden' van interventie op te sporen. Wel heb ik gedetailleerd bestudeerd hoe burokraten 'praktijken van interventie' tot stand brengen door boeren te 'labellen' en te klassificeren en anderzijds hoe boeren zich interventie toe-eigenen in hun onderhandelingen met de staat. Staats interventie in deze visie heeft verschillende gevolgen voor de verschillende actoren, en gaat gepaard met het bestaan van tegenstrijdige belangen.

De vraag die dit promotie-onderzoek beantwoordt, luidt: Wat zijn de verschillende praktijken die staat interventie tot stand brengt? Hoe gaan boeren en burokraten er mee om, en wat kunnen we derhalve zeggen over de rol van de staatsburocraties in agrarische ontwikkeling? Anderzijds, welke rol speelt interventie in de strategieën van boeren?

Het antwoord op deze vraag is als volgt. Door middel van een geïntegreerd ruraal ontwikkelingsprogramma in de Atlantische Zone van Costa Rica werd gepoogd boeren kolonisten om te vormen tot cliënten. 'Ontwikkeling', werd in dit perspectief gedefinieerd als een 'technische' a-politieke zaak. De gepoogde transformatie van boeren-kolonisten tot cliënten bracht allerlei classificatie en 'labelling' praktijken met zich mee, die effect hadden in de administratieve kontekst. Deze bleken echter niet te werken in de onderhandelingspraktijken tijdens het proces van dienstverlening. Het bleek daarentegen dat boeren verschillende strategieën ontwikkelden om zich de interventie toe te eigenen, te weerstaan of te manipuleren.

De bevindingen van dit onderzoek kunnen van belang zijn voor mensen die betrokken zijn bij het ontwikkelingsdenken in het algemeen en bij ontwikkelingsprojekten in het bijzonder. Er wordt gesteld dat meer aandacht besteed moet worden aan de politieke aspecten van staatsinterventie. Begrippen zoals success en mislukking van interventie zouden dan beschouwd moeten worden in de kontekst van de verschillende belangen, aspiraties en verplichtingen van de verschillende groepen actoren betrokken by interventie (beleidsmakers, 'front-line workers', en boeren).

Het proefschrift bestaat uit twee gedeelten. In hoofdstuk 1 t/m 4 worden interventiepraktijken behandeld. Van hoofdstuk 6 t/m 9 worden drie verschillende 'intervention-coping' strategieën behandeld die boeren ontwikkelen om met staatsinterventie om te gaan. In hoofdstuk 5 worden een aantal theoretische benaderingen van lokale administratie en landbouwbeleid behandeld die een kritisch standpunt innemen tegenover de aard en doelstellingen van interventie.

Hoofdstuk 1 schetst het onderzoeksprobleem en de methodologie die gehanteerd wordt aan de hand van een aantal ervaringen die ik had met functionarissen van het landhervormingsinstituut, IDA. Ook worden de centrale analytische concepten en de regionale context behandeld.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt een institutionele analyse van het IDA gegeven in termen van de concurrentie tussen drie verschillende institutionele projecten: de anti-interventionistische, de populistische en de geïntegreerde. Deze projecten onderscheidden zich in hun opvattingen over de rol van het IDA in landbouwontwikkeling en de wijze waarop boeren moeten worden benaderd. Doorslaggevend bij de opkomst van het derde institutionele project - de geïntegreerde - was de rol van de Amerikaanse ontwikkelingsorganisatie USAID door middel van de financiering van het O34 programma. Dit programma wordt beschreven als een poging om de efficiëntie van het IDA te verbeteren door een cliënt-gerichte benadering te introduceren. Dit gebeurde middels de invoering van doelmatige administratieve methoden en het geïntegreerd ruraal ontwikkelingsmodel.

In hoofdstuk 3 wordt het effect van het O34 programma bestudeerd op de lokale administratie van de Neguev nederzetting. In tegenstelling tot het beoogde in de projektdocumenten blijkt dienstverlening op een nogal ongeorganiseerde en ongemotiveerde wijze plaats te vinden. We zien dat in het geval van functionarissen de invoering van doelmatige administratieve procedures tot een grote mate van vervreemding van de boerenwerkelijkheid leidt. Dit uit zich in een afstandelijke omgang met boeren en de neiging om hen de schuld te geven van de problemen rondom projektimplementatie. In dit hoofdstuk wordt een verband gelegd tussen het 'model van de klient' zoals gehanteerd door de ontwerpers van het O34 programma en lokale praktijken van sociale controle die tot doel hebben de invloed van onafhankelijke boerenorganisaties uit te bannen. Er wordt gesteld dat dit model van de klient omgevormd wordt tot een instrument van 'labelling'. Het gevolg is het ontstaan van een ideologie van interventie waarmee de fouten en contradicties van het O34 programma worden verdoezeld en die het mogelijk maakt voor de functionarissen om hun autoriteit over de boeren te legitimeren.

In hoofdstuk 4 worden drie 'stijlen van opereren' van functionarissen behandeld: de organisatorische benadering van de voorlichter, de administratieve benadering van de juridische assistent, en de politieke benadering van de sociaal werker. Door de verschillen in stijlen van opereren te bestuderen wordt het mogelijk om te analyseren hoe functionarissen de ideologie van interventie in hun lokale leefwerelden internaliseren. Het belang van deze analyse is dat het laat zien dat interventie verschillende betekenissen krijgt in de strategieën van degenen die belast worden met de uitvoering van projecten en programma's. Interventie wordt dus niet gezien als de empirische uitwerking van een Weberiaanse bureaucratische rationaliteit of een Marxistische economische logika, maar in termen van hoe lokale actoren praktijken van interventie konstrueren en daaraan betekenis geven.

Hoofdstuk 5 heeft een brugfunctie. Een aantal theoretische onderwerpen en concepten, die reeds aan de orde zijn geweest - 'labelling', 'interfaces', 'access' - wordt op een kritische manier uitgediept, met als doel het ontwerpen van een

analytisch raamwerk om de strategieën te bestuderen die boeren ontwikkelen om zich aan staatsinterventie aan te passen, om die te weerstaan of te manipuleren. Daarbij wordt gekozen voor een methodologie die gericht is op de interpretatie en analyse van diskursieve praktijken. Diskursieve praktijken houden het vermogen in van sociale actoren om bepaalde thema's, argumenten en rethorische vormen te gebruiken in onderhandelingen met de staat.

Hoofdstuk 6 behandelt de geschiedenis van de invasie van het Neguev landgoed door de UPAGRA boerenorganisatie. Deze invasie werd gevolgd door intensieve vormen van staatsinterventie die eerst gericht waren op de politieke bestrijding van UPAGRA en daarna op de vorming van een toegewijde klientele. Toegang tot land en krediet, zoals die georganiseerd wordt door IDA functionarissen, is cruciaal in deze strijd. Ook wordt de opkomst van een groep van bemiddelaars, de 'gatekeepers' beschreven, die hun bijzondere positie als de 'lievelingen van het IDA' ontleenen aan het feit dat zij zich konformerden aan diens beleid. De aanpassingsstrategie van de 'gatekeepers' vormt echter een beletsel voor het tot stand brengen van lokale vormen van organisatie wanneer deze nodig worden in verband met het einde van het O34 programma.

In hoofdstuk 7 wordt interventie in Tierragrande-Macadamia behandeld, een nederzetting die sterke relaties onderhoudt met een linkse boerenorganisatie (FENAC). De regionale leiding van het IDA probeert gebruik te maken van de interne verdeeldheid die ontstaat in de gemeenschap wanneer plannen worden ontwikkeld om een weg aan te leggen. We zien dat een vermenging plaats vindt tussen persoonlijke belangen, aspiraties en rivaliteiten van een kleine groep van kolonisten. De poging van de regionale leiding van het IDA in de Atlantische zone mislukt echter wanneer Diego Casas, de linkse boerenleider, weet aan te tonen dat IDA niet in staat is om oplossingen te vinden voor een aantal organisatorische problemen. Hij is in staat om de thema's van lokale organisatie en solidariteit handig uit te spelen in zijn relatie met het IDA en zijn rivalen in de nederzetting.

In hoofdstuk 8 komt manipulatie als een strategie aan de orde door een waterleidingproject in de aangrenzende nederzetting van Tierragrande-la Isleta door te lichten. Dit project ontwikkelt zich als een belangrijke arena van onderhandeling tussen vertegenwoordigers van het waterleidinginstituut en verschillende groepen boeren binnen de nederzetting. Een bijzondere rol wordt gespeeld door Ignacio, een dominee die zeer bedreven is in het combineren van zijn persoonlijke (financiële) aspiraties, en die van de gemeenschap. Om zijn doel te bereiken gaat Ignacio een alliantie aan met de sociale werker van het waterleidinginstituut, die weliswaar overtuigd is van diens organisatorische kwaliteiten maar hem niet helemaal vertrouwt. Ignacio speelt een kundig spel dat gekenmerkt wordt door een mengsel van bluf, intimidatie en een zeer sterk vermogen om te overtuigen, niet in het minst door het gebruik van godsdienst om mensen aan zich te binden. Tegelijkertijd wordt hij steeds meer als een probleemgeval gezien door functionarissen van het IDA. Meer gevreesd dan geliefd maar alom bewonderd voor zijn daadkracht is hij in staat om alle eer voor het project naar zich toe te halen, de relaties met de staat te monopoliseren en een aantal belangrijke actoren in de gemeenschap en daarbuiten in zijn project in te lijven. Deze 'case study' biedt ons de mogelijkheid om te analyseren hoe interventie een rol krijgt binnen de individuele en groeps strategieën van lokale actoren.

In hoofdstuk 9, wordt een samenvatting gepresenteerd van het argument van het boek alsmede de conclusies. Ook worden een aantal alternatieve benaderingen voor de studie van staat-boeren relaties kritisch behandeld. Tenslotte worden een aantal theoretische elementen aangedragen voor een sociologie van interventie.

Resumen

Este libro estudia relaciones estado-campesinado a través de un enfoque sobre las estrategias desplegadas por campesinos y burócratas para tratar con formas de intervención tales como programas, proyectos y otros instrumentos de política estatal. En concreto, esta tesis trata sobre la implementación de un programa de desarrollo rural integrado en un área de colonización en la zona atlántica de Costa Rica. En la literatura sobre intervención estatal se pueden encontrar dos corrientes. Por un lado existen trabajos que conceptualizan la intervención como una actividad administrativa, prestando poca atención al significado político de la intervención como una arena en la que interactúan funcionarios públicos y beneficiarios. Por el otro lado existe toda una gama de estudios que ven la intervención como un instrumento al servicio de la expansión del capital, un proceso que supuestamente ocurre a costa de la autonomía de los pequeños agricultores. Dentro de esta última perspectiva, la intervención se concibe como un instrumento de incorporación de agricultores dentro del aparato administrativo estatal. Mi acercamiento se diferencia de este tipo de estudios en el sentido de que se intenta estudiar el proceso de intervención a través de la investigación de las prácticas de negociación entre burócratas y agricultores. Es decir, no se toman las intenciones formales de un proyecto o de un programa como punto de partida. Tampoco se intenta buscar los 'objetivos escondidos' de la intervención. En cambio, el estudio está enfocado hacia la manera en la cual los burócratas llevan a cabo prácticas de intervención a través de la clasificación y 'etiquetamiento' de agricultores; así como en la forma en que estos últimos se apropian la intervención en sus negociaciones con el estado. Según ésta perspectiva, la intervención estatal tiene diferentes consecuencias para los diversos actores sociales e implica la existencia de intereses opuestos.

Las preguntas que esta tesis trata de responder son las siguientes. ¿Cuáles son las diversas prácticas que conforman la intervención estatal? ¿Cómo usan los agricultores y burócratas estas prácticas y, por lo tanto, qué tanto podemos decir sobre el papel del estado en el desarrollo agrícola? Por otro lado, qué papel juega la intervención en las estrategias de los agricultores?

La respuesta a estas preguntas es la siguiente: A través de un programa de desarrollo rural integrado en la zona atlántica de Costa Rica se intentó transformar a colonos en clientes. Dentro de este programa el concepto de desarrollo fué definido como un problema técnico y apolítico. Este intento de transformación de campesinos-colonos en clientes trajo consigo una serie de prácticas de clasificación y de etiquetamiento. Estas prácticas, sin embargo, no resultaron ser muy efectivas durante el proceso de prestación de servicios. El presente estudio aporta evidencia para demostrar que los agricultores desarrollaron diferentes estrategias para apropiarse, resistir o manipular la intervención del estado.

Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser de utilidad para todos aquellos interesados en problemas de desarrollo y, en particular, para aquellos que trabajan para proyectos de desarrollo. Se plantea que se debe prestar mas atención a los aspectos políticos de la intervención estatal y que conceptos como éxito y fracaso de la intervención adquieren significados específicos dentro del contexto de los intereses, compromisos y aspiraciones de los diferentes grupos de actores (planificadores, administradores, técnicos responsables de la implementación, agricultores).

La tesis consiste de dos partes. Del capítulo 1 hasta 4 se discuten las prácticas de intervención. En los capítulos 6 a 9 se analizan tres estrategias diferentes desplegadas por los agricultores para hacerle frente a la intervención. En el capítulo 5 se esbozan unas cuantas aproximaciones teóricas sobre administración local y políticas agrarias que critican el carácter y los objetivos de la intervención estatal.

A partir de unas cuantas experiencias que tuve con funcionarios del Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario, el IDA, el primer capítulo traza la problemática de investigación y la metodología utilizada. Además, se presentan los conceptos analíticos centrales y el contexto regional. El segundo capítulo contiene un análisis institucional del IDA en términos de la competencia entre tres diferentes proyectos institucionales: el anti-intervencionista, el populista y el integral. Estos proyectos se diferencian en sus criterios sobre el papel del IDA en el desarrollo agrario de la nación y en sus concepciones sobre la manera más efectiva de tratar al los agricultores. En el desarrollo del tercer proyecto institucional - el integrado - la agencia de desarrollo de los Estados Unidos (USAID) tuvo un papel decisivo a través del financiamiento del programa 034. Se puede describir este programa como un intento para aumentar la eficiencia del IDA por medio de la introducción de un modelo de prestación de servicios en el que se conceptualiza al agricultor como un cliente. Esto ocurrió a través de la introducción de métodos administrativos eficaces y del modelo de desarrollo rural integral.

En el tercer capítulo se estudian los efectos del programa 034 sobre la administración local del asentamiento Neguev. Al contrario de lo que se esperaba, el prestamiento de servicios se llevó a cabo de una forma bastante desorganizada y desmotivada. Así, por ejemplo, vemos que en el caso de los funcionarios la introducción de procedimientos administrativos eficaces conlleva a un desconocimiento de la realidad campesina, lo que se manifiesta en una relación distanciada con los agricultores, así como en la tendencia de culpar a estos por los problemas que se suscitaron durante la implementación del proyecto. En este capítulo se hace una conexión entre 'el modelo del cliente' diseñado por los planificadores del programa 034 y las prácticas institucionales de control social que tienen como fin erradicar la influencia de organizaciones campesinas independientes. Se plantea que el 'modelo del cliente' es transformado en un 'modelo de clasificación y etiquetamiento. El resultado es la creación de una ideología de intervención por medio de la cual los errores y las contradicciones del programa 034 son desdibujadas, lo cual que permite a los funcionarios justificar su autoridad ante los parceleros.

En el cuarto capítulo se discuten los estilos de operación de tres funcionarios diferentes: el estilo organizativo del extensionista, el estilo jurídico del asistente legal y el estilo político del trabajador social. Por medio del examen de los diferentes estilos de operación se analiza la internalización de la ideología de intervención en los mundos de vida de diferentes funcionarios. La importancia de este análisis radica en el hecho de que muestra que intervención estatal adquiere un significado concreto en el contexto de los estilos de operación de todos aquellos responsable de la implementación de proyectos y programas. La intervención, por lo tanto, no se conceptualiza como el efecto empírico de alguna racionalidad weberiana o de una lógica económica marxista, sino en términos de la capacidad de los actores sociales para construir prácticas de intervención y de darles a estos un significado propio.

El quinto capítulo tiene una función de 'puente'. En él se examinan de manera crítica algunos temas y conceptos teóricos que se introdujeron en los capítulos anteriores - tales como etiquetamiento, 'interface', acceso - a fin de diseñar un marco analítico que permita investigar las estrategias desplegadas por los agricultores para acomodarse, resistir or manipular la intervención estatal. Para tal propósito se opta por una metodología que posibilite

la interpretación y el análisis de prácticas discursivas, prácticas discursivas que permiten a los actores sociales usar temas, argumentos y formas retóricas específicas en sus relaciones con el estado.

En el sexto capítulo se discute la historia de la invasión de la hacienda Neguev por la organización campesina UPAGRA. Como respuesta a esta invasión el estado desplegó formas intensivas de intervención que inicialmente se dirigieron a erradicar la influencia de UPAGRA y posteriormente a la formación de una clientela de agricultores. El uso político del acceso a la tierra y el crédito que funcionarios del IDA hicieron fueron cruciales en esta lucha. Además, se examina la aparición de un grupo de intermediarios denominados 'gatekeepers', que deben su posición de 'favoritos del IDA' al hecho de que se han adaptado a las políticas de la institución. Sin embargo, la estrategia de acomodamiento de estos intermediarios se convierte en un impedimento para la creación de formas locales de organización en el momento en que los primeros son considerados como necesarios al finalizar el programa 034.

En el séptimo capítulo se estudia la intervención institucional en Tierragrande Macadamia, un asentamiento que mantiene relaciones estrechas con una organización campesina de izquierda (FENAC). La oficina regional del IDA intenta utilizar las divisiones que se presentan en el asentamiento después que se da conocer el plan de construcción de un camino. Vemos aquí que se da un enredo entre los intereses personales, las rivalidades y las aspiraciones de liderazgo de un pequeño grupo de colonistas. Los intentos de los administradores regionales del IDA en la zona atlántica de neutralizar a los 'comunistas' fracasan en el momento que Diego Casas, el líder campesino de izquierda, es capaz de probar a la comunidad que el IDA no tiene la perseverancia necesaria para encontrarle solución a una serie de problemas organizativos. Este dirigente campesino demuestra gran habilidad en la utilización estratégica de los temas de organización local y solidaridad en su relación con el IDA y con sus rivales dentro del asentamiento.

En el octavo capítulo se discute una estrategia de manipulación por medio de la historia de un proyecto de acueductos en el asentamiento contiguo a Tierragrande-La Isleta. Este proyecto aparece como una importante arena de negociación entre representantes del Instituto de Acueductos y Alcantarrillado (AyA) y diversos grupos de campesinos dentro del asentamiento. Un papel preponderante dentro de este proyecto es el que juega Ignacio, un pastor evangélico muy diestro para combinar sus aspiraciones personales y financieras con los 'intereses' de la comunidad. Para alcanzar su objetivo, Ignacio entabla una alianza con el trabajador social del AyA quien, a pesar de estar convencido de los talentos organizativos del primero no le tiene mucha confianza. Ignacio juega un papel hábil que consiste en una mezcla de jactancia e intimidación, así como en una gran capacidad de convencimiento. (La religión es un elemento importante en sus prácticas de creación de adeptos). Ignacio, quien es más temido que querido pero quien se gana la admiración de todos por su energía y resolución, es capaz de atribuirse los honores del proyecto, de monopolizar las relaciones con el estado y de enlistar una serie de actores dentro y fuera del asentamiento para la consecución de su propio proyecto personal. Este estudio de caso nos ofrece la posibilidad de analizar cómo la intervención estatal adquiere un significado específico dentro de las estrategias individuales y de grupo de los actores sociales.

En el noveno y último capítulo aparece un resumen del argumento del libro y se presentan las conclusiones. También se presenta una discusión crítica de algunas aproximaciones alternativas para el estudio de las relaciones estado-campesino. Finalmente, se aportan algunos elementos para una sociología de la intervención.

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Curriculum Vitae

Pieter de Vries, born in Medellin, Colombia, in 1958.

After spending my youth in Lima, Peru, I came to Holland in 1972 where I finished secondary education. I started studying Non-western agrarian sociology in 1978. In 1982 I went back to Peru, to the highlands, to conduct research on the regional system of the Huancavelica area under supervision of Prof. Dr. Norman Long in collaboration with the Catholic University of Lima. When the guerrilla group, Shining Path, started to expand its operations in that area and the army took control over the city I decided to go back to the Netherlands.

In 1984-85 I undertook a marketing study of beans in four villages of the eastern region of Antioquia, Colombia, for the *Centro de Investigación Agrónomica Tropical* (CIAT). Interestingly, this research showed that in spite of the efforts of the agricultural research institutes to introduce agricultural innovations, it was peasant smallholders themselves who took the lead in developing 'adapted' technologies, while ignoring the recommendations of the local extension service. In the case of eastern Antioquia this led to a highly differentiated pattern of crop production.

In 1985-86 I wrote a thesis on regional theory with special emphasis on the Latin American context in which the relationship between local history, economics and culture was central. One theoretical problem which became apparent in this review of regional perspectives was the necessity to theorize social change from the perspective of the social actors. This awakened an interest in intermediate forms of organisation, in which different groups and individuals with different interests and commitments interact.

In 1986 I participated in an exploratory survey in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica undertaken by the Wageningen Agricultural University in collaboration with the *Centro Agrónomica de Tecnología Investigación y Enseñanza* which settles in Turrialba, Costa Rica. In 1987 I started Phd. research on peasant strategies and state intervention for the Atlantic zone Programme of CATIE/AUW/MAG. In september of that year I married Monique Nuyten. In april 1988 our twin daughters, Alicia and Liliana were born in San José, Costa Rica. In 1989 we returned to the Netherlands. We are planning to travel to Mexico in october 1992 where we will start research on state intervention and local organisation.

